

SLEEP SAFE

Alone. Back. Crib.

NO EXCEPTIONS

Real mothers tell their own stories about safe sleep and the choices they would make if they could go back and make them again

DISCUSSION GUIDE

This discussion guide is designed to reinforce key information contained in the SLEEP SAFE video and assist you in leading discussions before and after viewing the video with groups of people in your community.

The video presents three mothers who movingly tell the story of how their infants died in unsafe sleeping environments. People may find the video sad or upsetting. The suggestions and questions in this guide may help put viewers' minds at ease and will help reinforce the messages of the video.

The talking points included are suggestions—you know your audience best and we encourage you to adapt these points to their specific needs.



VIDEO VIEWING TIPS

BEFORE THE VIDEO

Make sure everyone is seated comfortably and can see the screen. Allow viewers to adjust their chairs so they can see. Ask that cell phones be turned off before starting the video.

Introduction:

B'more for Healthy Babies is an innovative effort to reduce infant mortality in Baltimore City. Far too many babies die before their first birthday each year in our city. Many of these deaths happen while the baby is sleeping and many are preventable. Today we will view a short video about this problem – and how we as parents, caretakers, family members and concerned neighbors can help stop it.

SHOW THE VIDEO

AFTER THE VIDEO

Ask your audience about their feelings after seeing the video and what they've learned:

- *What are your first impressions of the video?*
- *Do you think this is a real problem in our community?*
- *Could this happen to your baby or to a baby that you know?*
- *What will you do differently after seeing this video?*
- *How should we be putting our babies to sleep?*
- *Do you think it will be difficult to follow the advice in this video?*
- *What will you tell others who care for your baby about how and where your baby should sleep?*

REMIND THE AUDIENCE



What you can do: you can put your baby to sleep safely EVERY TIME he or she goes to bed at night or for a nap. There are three things to remember:



Alone.

Most sleep related deaths occur when babies sleep with an adult or another child, or in an adult bed or on a sofa. Share your room with your baby, but not your bed.



Back.

The safest position for a baby to sleep is on his or her back. Babies are not more likely to choke while lying on their backs. In fact, they breathe better and are less likely to choke. When a baby is on its stomach, anything spit up can block the air pipe and cause choking or breathing problems.



Crib.

Your baby's sleeping place should be clean and clear. No blankets, pillows, fluffy toys or stuffed animals. Just put a tight-fitting sheet on a firm mattress. Your baby can wear a sleeper if it is cold.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR



- Q.** My mother and auntie are telling me that they placed their babies on their stomachs while sleeping and that I slept on my stomach, so my baby should sleep on his stomach. Should I listen to them?
- A.** No. As the years have passed and more studies have been done, we have learned that infants are less likely to die from SIDS if they are placed on their back for sleep.

- Q.** Everyone I know sleeps with their baby—it's part of my culture.
- A.** Babies are more likely to suffocate when they sleep with an adult in an adult bed. It is important to remember to put your baby's safety first.

- Q.** My baby looks so uncomfortable on his back. He can't sleep that way.
- A.** In most of the sleep-related deaths reported in 2009 for Baltimore City, the babies were found sleeping on their stomachs. Two of them had been placed to sleep on their side. Doctors have known for years that babies sleep safest on their backs. Since the Back to Sleep campaign started almost 20 years ago, deaths due to SIDS have been cut in half. Every time your baby lies down to sleep, he should be on his back— not his side or stomach. No exceptions.

Put your newborn baby on his or her back to sleep from day one. Your baby will soon get used to sleeping like that—he or she will think it is natural.

If your baby is used to sleeping on his stomach it may take a few days for him to get used to it, but rest assured—he will. Soon your baby will think it is natural. You can give him a pacifier to help calm him.



QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

Q. What if my baby rolls over by himself?

A. Once your baby has reached an age where he or she is able to roll over from back to stomach, there is no need to reposition him. You can let the baby sleep in that position. Do not use a pillow or rolled up blanket to keep your baby on his back. These items may also increase the risk of your baby suffocating.

Q. How am I going to breastfeed if my baby doesn't sleep with me?

A. Remember—share a room, not a bed. Put your baby's crib next to your bed so that you can easily pick him or her up for feedings during the night then return him or her to bed for sleeping.

Q. How am I going to bond with my baby if she doesn't sleep with me?

A. Holding your infant for feedings and bonding is encouraged. It is only when your infant is sleeping that he or she needs to be alone, on their back and in a crib. You may find you sleep better too!

Q. When can I stop placing a baby to sleep on her back?

A. You should always place the baby on her back, but once the baby is able to roll over on her own don't worry about trying to keep her on her back.

Q. Doesn't my baby need to spend time on his tummy?

A. Yes! You can give your baby "tummy time" when he is awake and being watched. This will help strengthen his neck and arm muscles and prevent flat spots on the back of his head.

Q. Where do I go to get more information on safe sleep?

A. Visit www.healthybabiesbaltimore.com

Q. Where can I get a crib if I can't afford to buy one?

A. For help in getting a crib, or in accessing health services, contact Baltimore Health Care Access at 410-649-0526.

OTHER MESSAGES YOU CAN SHARE ABOUT SLEEPING SAFELY:

- *Keeping your home smoke free can also reduce your baby's risk. Don't let anyone smoke around your baby. That includes you!*
- *You can also use a pacifier to calm your baby and help him or her go to sleep. Research suggests that pacifiers help reduce risk too.*

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