

# Safer sleep advice for emergency situations

A guide for parents and carers



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## Who are **The Lullaby Trust**?

The Lullaby Trust raises awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS, also known as 'cot death'), provides expert advice on safer sleep for babies and offers emotional support for bereaved families.

### What is SIDS?

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden and unexpected death of a baby for no obvious reason and although we don't yet know how to completely prevent SIDS, it is possible to significantly lower the chances of it happening by following the advice.

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We are aware that fleeing from conflict or crisis means that sleeping conditions will be unpredictable. It may not always be possible to access a recommended sleeping space for a baby, so we've adapted our safer sleep advice based on different sleeping situations. While those in crisis may not have the facilities to follow all of this advice, we hope that this information provides helpful guidelines. All babies should have as safe a sleeping space as possible especially when they're not in their usual home environment.

Babies who are normally sleeping on their back but sometimes sleep on their front are at a greater risk of SIDS.

## The importance of routine in reducing the risk of SIDS

It can be difficult to follow the same routine when your living arrangements keep changing; however it is really important to keep the same sleeping routine for your baby and keep putting them to sleep on their back for every day and night time sleep. Babies who are normally sleeping on their back but sometimes sleep on their front are at a greater risk of SIDS.

- A** Always sleep your baby..
- B** ..on their back..
- C** ..in a clear cot or sleep space.



# You have a cot or Moses basket

If you have access to a cot, crib, travel cot or Moses basket, this is ideal.

Babies need just a few basic items for sleep: a **firm, flat surface and some well-fitted bedding**. We recommend babies are slept in cots or Moses baskets that are kept clear.

We specifically advise:

- ❌ No pillows or duvets
- ❌ No cot bumpers
- ❌ No soft toys
- ❌ No loose bedding
- ❌ No pods or nests
- ❌ No sleep positioning products (such as wedges or straps) that will keep your baby in one sleeping position



Travel cot mattresses are a lot thinner than a conventional cot mattress, however they are fine for a baby to sleep on, and our only advice is **don't be tempted to place folded blankets or a quilt under the baby to make them 'more comfortable'**. Avoid loose bedding - babies are at higher risk of SIDS if they have their heads covered with loose bedding.

**Place your baby on their back in the 'feet to foot' position** (placing baby's feet to the bottom end of the cot or Moses basket to avoid them wriggling down under the covers). Use a thin blanket no higher than their shoulders, and firmly tucked in under the mattress.

# No cot or Moses basket?

If you do not have a cot or Moses basket then you should try and find another type of firm, flat, safe sleep surface for your baby. In this section we go through some of the things you need to know if you bring your baby into bed with you, or sleep with them somewhere else. We also talk through some of the other places your baby might sleep.

## For safer bedsharing:

- Keep pillows, sheets, blankets away from your baby or any other items that could obstruct your baby's breathing or cause them to overheat. A high proportion of infants who die as a result of SIDS are found with their head covered by loose bedding
- Sleep baby on their back
- If possible, avoid letting other children into the bed - it is not recommended that an older child shares a bed with you and a baby, but if you choose to do this, or there is no other option, then you or your partner should sleep between the child and the baby
- Make sure your baby won't fall out of bed or get trapped between the mattress and the wall

**Bedsharing means that baby shares the same bed with an adult for most of the night, and not just to be comforted or fed.**



It's a good idea to follow all of our safer sleep advice for **every sleep** if you can.



## It's really important to know when it's **NOT** safe to bedshare

- ✗ Either you or your partner **smokes** (even if you do not smoke in the bedroom)
- ✗ Either you or your partner has **drunk any alcohol or taken drugs** (including medications that may make you drowsy)
- ✗ Your baby was **born premature** (before 37 weeks)
- ✗ Your baby was **born at a low weight** (2.5kg or 5½ lbs or less)
- ✗ **Never sleep on a sofa or armchair** with your baby

### Can't bedshare?

If you don't have a cot or Moses basket and you would prefer not to/can't bedshare with your baby, we would advise using a **safe, firm, flat space for your baby**. The following advice gives examples you may want to consider.

If any of the above points apply, make sure your baby has a separate sleeping space

## If you have a pram / carrycot or a buggy

- Ensure the base of the buggy or pram is flat and not sloping
- Keep the hood down when indoors
- Don't cover the pram/buggy. For example, don't put material or a blanket over the top of the pram to keep out light
- The padded sides of a pram/carrycot may trap more heat, so keep checking the baby's temperature by feeling the back of their neck or chest – if their skin feels sweaty they are too hot so remove a layer of bedding or what they are wearing



# Baby boxes

If you have access to a baby box to sleep your baby we advise the following:

- Do not lift or carry the box if your baby is in it
- Do not put the lid on the box if your baby is in it
- Always keep the box clear as a sleeping space
- Do not place additional bedding on top of or underneath the mattress to raise your baby up to a higher level
- Ensure the box is placed on a solid surface and cannot fall over, preferably on the floor if it is clean and dry
- Do not use the box if it gets wet or soiled
- Ensure that any pets stay away from the box

Baby boxes are cardboard boxes specifically designed for babies to sleep in



## Car seats

If you have a car seat, **do not let your baby stay in it for long.** This is particularly important for premature or young babies. Car seats are designed to keep babies safe while travelling, not as a main sleeping place. They should be taken out as soon as you get to your destination, and placed onto a firm, flat surface to sleep.



# Temperature

The weather in the UK is generally mild but can change, and it might be different to the temperatures you and your baby are used to.



It is important to make sure that your baby is a comfortable temperature – not too hot or too cold. Babies don't need hats indoors. It's important to keep your baby's head uncovered while they are sleeping, so they can lose heat from their heads when necessary. Babies who are unwell need fewer, not more layers. Feel your baby's chest or the back of their neck (your baby's hands and feet will usually be cooler, which is normal). If your baby's skin is hot or sweaty, remove one or more layers of clothing or bedding.



It may not be possible for you to control the room temperature, but 16-20°C with light bedding or a lightweight, well-fitting baby sleep bag, is a comfortable and safe room temperature for sleeping babies.

# Baby banks

If you need baby items, you can get help from a baby bank. **A baby bank is like a food bank but for baby essentials and are for families who need help.** They provide pre-owned items for newborns to 5-year-olds donated from the local community. These products include sleeping products such as cots, travel cots and Moses baskets.

If you are in contact with any professionals ask them to refer you to a baby bank. You can also contact your local baby bank directly and you may be able to self-refer.





We appreciate that this must be a very distressing, unsettling experience for you and your baby. If you have any concerns about the sleeping products provided (or not provided) please speak to your accommodation provider or your support worker. We also encourage you to speak to your midwife or health visitor as they will be able to give you specialist advice.

Health visitors are specialist midwives or nurses who have additional training in community public health nursing. They work with all families 0-5 and offer more support to those who need it the most.



**You are not alone and there are organisations out there who can support you during this time:**

**Little Village - [littlevillagehq.org](http://littlevillagehq.org)**

Like a food bank, but for clothes, toys and equipment for babies and children up to the age of 5 based in London but you can also use their website to search for your local baby bank

**Happy Baby Community - [happybabycommunity.org.uk](http://happybabycommunity.org.uk)**

Community of support for women who have fled from violence or traffickers, and are pregnant or with a young child

**New Roots - [refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services](http://refugeecouncil.org.uk/get-support/services)**

Mental health support services for people with refugee status

**The Trussell Trust - [trusselltrust.org](http://trusselltrust.org)**

A network of over 1,200 food bank centres to provide emergency food and compassionate, practical support to people in crisis

**Best Beginnings - [bestbeginnings.org.uk](http://bestbeginnings.org.uk)**


Support for all parents, co-parents and care-givers to give their children the best beginning in life

**Shelter - [shelter.org.uk](http://shelter.org.uk)**

Housing advice, information and advocacy for people in need

**UK UNHCR - [unhcr.org](http://unhcr.org)**

Global organisation safeguarding the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee violence and persecution



The Lullaby Trust's work is  
reliant on donations from  
the public and gifts in Wills.  
To find out how you can help  
us continue to save lives  
and support families, visit  
[lullabytrust.org.uk /support-us](https://lullabytrust.org.uk/support-us)







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We hope this helps. If you have any questions or concerns about safer sleep, please do not hesitate to contact **The Lullaby Trust** on **0808 802 6869** or **info@lullabytrust.org.uk**

You can also follow us on **Instagram**, **Twitter** and **Facebook** where you can message us with any questions you have **@lullabytrust**



### **Brought to you by The Lullaby Trust**

The Lullaby Trust provides expert advice on safer sleep for babies, supports bereaved families and raises awareness on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

[www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)

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**We have access to translation services**

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