



Shared
Health
Foundation.



Safer sleep advice for emergency situations

A guide for parents and carers

Who is Little Lullaby?

Little Lullaby is a project completely dedicated to young parents under 25 and is part of The Lullaby Trust. The Lullaby Trust raises awareness of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), 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 when you're in a crisis or if you don't have a permanent home, sleeping conditions can 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



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Travel cot mattresses are a lot thinner than a normal 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

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

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 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.



How to safely use second-hand baby sleeping products

If you are using a second-hand sleeping product for your baby, there are few checks you can carry out to make sure it's safe to use.



If you're using a second-hand baby mattress:

- Check that it's in good condition, no rips or tears
- It has a waterproof cover
- It's still firm and flat and doesn't look like it has water damage
- Make sure the mattress fits the cot or Moses basket with no gaps
- Make sure it has a fire-resistant label on it like these

Filling material(s) and covering fabric(s) meet the requirements for resistance to cigarette and match ignition in the 1988 safety regulations.

**CARELESSNESS
CAUSES FIRE**

Cots and Moses baskets

Make sure the sleeping product (cot, travel cot or Moses basket) is in good condition, for example no broken parts.

If you are given a cot or Moses basket

You might be given a cot or Moses basket by family, friends or a baby bank. It's very important that you have instructions, or you get hold of a copy of the instructions from the manufacturer or website. When a manufacturer creates a sleeping product, they mean for it to be used in a certain way. Using an item in a way the manufacturer did not intend could put your baby at risk. Baby banks should provide information about the product but if not, ask the staff.

If you have any concerns about the sleeping products provided, please speak to the accommodation provider, support worker or your health visitor. We also encourage you to speak to your midwife or health visitor as they will be able to give you specialist advice. Your voice is important and if you have any worries or concerns, it's your right to ask or seek assistance.

If you don't feel you are being listened to, please do not hesitate to contact your health visitor or support worker.

You are not alone and there are organisations and professionals out there that would be more than happy to support you during this time.

Helpful questions and phrases

If you don't feel confident or you're unsure how to approach staff or what questions to ask, you can use the following phrases:

'I didn't manage to grab my Red Book, please can you help me contact my health visitor or GP?'

'The cot/Moses basket is broken or partially broken. Please can you help me with replacing it as the safer sleep guidelines advise me not to use it if it's broken. Thank you.'

'The mattress is wet and or has rips or tears and or doesn't fit the cot/Moses basket. Please can you help me with replacing it as the safer sleep guidelines advise me not to use it if it's not in good condition and it has to fit the cot/Moses basket properly. Thank you.'





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

Little Village - 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

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

Mental health support services for people with refugee status

The Trussell Trust - 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

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

Shelter - shelter.org.uk

Housing advice, information and advocacy for people in need

UK UNHCR - unhcr.org

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

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 & Shared Health Foundation



Shared Health is a not-for-profit working to reduce the impact of poverty on health and are passionate about providing safer sleeping for homeless families and their babies.

www.sharedhealthfoundation.org.uk

For more information about Little Lullaby, please visit us at:
www.littlelullaby.org.uk

You'll find our blogs, vlogs and lots of helpful resources and support for young parents.

Find us on social media:
@littlelullabyuk



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

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We have access to translation services

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