

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID)

What is SUID?

SUID is a category of infant death (infant being a child less than one year of age) that includes:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or Sudden Unexplained Death in Infancy (SUDI);
- Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed (ASSB); or
- Undetermined or Unknown Causes of Death.

What is the impact of SUID in Kentucky?

SUID is a **leading cause** of infant death in Kentucky. The rate of SUID in Kentucky is double the national rate. These deaths often happen during sleep or in the baby's sleep area and many of them are preventable.

What Risk and Protective Factors are associated with SUID?

Risk Factors associated with SUID

-  **Smoke exposure:** (during and after pregnancy) doubles the risk of an infant dying from SUID.
-  **Unsafe sleep practices:** 94% of SUID cases in Kentucky have at least one unsafe sleep factor.
-  **Pre-term birth:** an infant born before 37 weeks gestation has a higher risk of dying from SUID.

Protective Factors associated with SUID

-  **Breastfeeding:** reduces the risk of SUID by at least 35%.
-  **Safe Sleep:** following the **ABCD's of safe sleep** for every sleep.
-  **Pacifiers:** Offering a pacifier during sleep but do not attach it to any object (toy, clothing, etc.)

What are the ABCD's of Safe Sleep?

Alone: Babies should always sleep **alone**. There should never be anything else in a baby's sleep space except for the baby. A pacifier is permissible if the baby uses one, but it should not be attached to a cord, stuffed animal or anything.

Back: A baby should always sleep on his/her **back** for every sleep- both night time and naps. Back sleeping on a firm surface reduces the risk of SIDS.

Crib: A baby's **crib** should only contain a firm mattress covered by a fitted sheet; the crib should be clear of blankets, toys, pillows, bumpers, or other items that could cover a baby's face and suffocate them.

Danger: Being tired, sleepy, exhausted or under the influence of alcohol or drugs (including some prescriptions) impairs one's ability to care for a baby, making bed sharing and other unsafe sleep practices more **dangerous**.

How can CPS workers help reduce SUID?

- Ask parents with infants where their baby sleeps and have them show you the sleep space.
- Explain the importance of a safe sleep environment to the parents. Go over the ABCD's of safe sleep and provide a door hanger, magnet, or other educational materials for their reference.
- If a family you work with doesn't have a safe sleep space, advise the family to contact their local health department for assistance in obtaining a crib.
- Crying peaks between 3-6 weeks after birth. Infants who cry a lot or are awake and fussy at night are a concern to many parents. Make sure your parents have a safe care plan for times when they become frustrated or overwhelmed. Remind them to never, never, never shake a baby.

For more information on SUID including ordering educational materials, reach out to us:

★ **Website:** www.safesleepky.org

★ **Facebook:** Safe Sleep KY

★ **Email:** SafeSleepKY@ky.gov

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Nice to know, safe sleep recommendations explained: Experts believe SIDS victims have an immature arousal center in the brain. Put simply, **they can't wake themselves up when they're having trouble breathing.** Below the elements are discussed in fuller detail.

Alone: Stay close, Sleep apart.

Sleeping in the parents' bedroom is safest for infants throughout the first year of life.

- Bed-sharing is not recommended for any baby. Only bring your baby into your bed to feed or comfort him/her. Place your baby back in a safe sleep space when you are ready to go to sleep.
- Keeping the crib or bassinette in the mother's room allows closer proximity for feeding, regardless of feeding method. Room sharing can reduce the risk of SIDS by 50%.
- Pacifiers are a protective factor and have been shown in multiple studies to reduce the risk of SIDS by as much as 90%. Never attach the pacifier to an object.

Back: On their back for every sleep.

Babies who sleep on their backs are **much less likely** to die of SIDS than babies who sleep on their stomach or sides.

- If baby rolls over on his or her own during sleep, there is no need to reposition the baby. Starting sleep on the back is the most important for reducing sleep related deaths.
- Babies who are used to sleeping on their backs, but who are then placed to sleep on their stomachs, are at very high risk of SIDS.
- Never use a sleep positioner (wedge, rolled blanket, or pillow) to maintain a side-lying or propped-up sleep position or to prop a bottle.
- Babies on their backs are less likely to get stomach contents up from the esophagus into their windpipe and aspirate.

Upper Respiratory Anatomy



Baby placed on their back.

Baby placed on their stomach

Crib: In a clean, clear crib.

The safe crib, (including a bassinette or pack and play) contains nothing but a baby, sleeping on his/her back, on a firm mattress with a tight fitted sheet made for that particular mattress.

- Avoid placing soft bedding under, over and next to the infant. No bumpers, toys, or loose blankets. Soft materials present a suffocation risk for infants.
- Swaddling can calm a fussy newborn. Make sure the swaddle is snug but doesn't restrict breathing. When an infant begins to roll or can loosen the swaddling, swaddling should be stopped.
- The latest crib standards eliminate the drop-down sides that were associated with many infant injuries and deaths from entrapment. Using a pre-2011 crib is not safe.
- Because babies are growing, their spines and bones need more support than adults. This is critical to ensuring that their lungs can expand sufficiently. The mattress should be firm and flat.
- To test firmness "Press on the mattress in the center and the edges. It should snap back readily and should not conform to the shape of your hand."
- If baby falls asleep in a car seat, stroller, swing, infant carrier, or sling, the infant should be moved to a safe sleep surface placed on his/her back as soon as possible.

To read more about the national guidelines for safe sleep visit: [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)