



SPARK
LEARNING LAB

Tips for Creating a Safe Sleep Environment for Infants in Child Care



This resource assesses the safe sleep environment in programs serving infants. Information included is based on American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations and best practices outlined in *Caring for Our Children*, 4th ed. and applies to infants under 12 months of age.

Assess the sleep environment:

- The infant is always placed to sleep on their back, on a firm sleep surface, such as a safety-approved crib mattress, and in a safety-approved crib, porta-crib or play yard (check your licensing regulations for requirements pertaining to the type of child care you provide). Transition to a cot cannot happen until after the child's first birthday in a center/ministry or after 24 months in a family child care program.
- The mattress fits snugly in the crib.
- The fitted crib sheet fits tightly around the mattress.
- The infant is never placed to sleep on a sofa, chair or adult bed.
- There is no soft or loose bedding, such as a quilt, placed underneath the infant.
- All blankets, pillows, quilts and bumpers are kept out of the infant's sleep area.
- Nothing covers the infant's face. All bibs, hats and pacifier cords are removed before the infant is placed to sleep.
- Crib gyms, crib toys, mobiles, mirrors and all objects/toys are prohibited from being in or attached to an infant's crib.
- Stuffed animals, stuffed toys and loose bedding are kept out of the sleep area.
- There is no smoking in the program. The infant is kept away from any area where smoking has occurred.
- The sleeping infant is not overheated by a room temperature that is too high or because of too many layers of clothing.
- If an alternate sleep position or aid is required for medical reasons, an alternate sleep position medical waiver is on file. This waiver must list the medical reason for the alternate sleep position, be signed by a physician, and be approved by the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning.





Be sure to follow these important rules of infant care:

- Infants under 12 months of age are always placed on their backs to sleep, for naps and at night.
- Instead of a blanket, the infant can be placed to sleep in an approved sleep sack.
- When the infant is awake and supervised by a caregiver, it is desirable to place him or her on the stomach for "tummy time," which helps infants achieve developmental milestones.
- The program shall not use products, such as wedges, etc., that are intended to control the position of the infant in sleep, as these have not been sufficiently tested for effectiveness or safety.
- If the infant falls asleep in another area (i.e.: carrier, car seat or swing) they should be immediately removed and placed in a safety approved crib, porta-crib or Pack 'N Play.
- Swaddling is not allowable in child care programs.
- The infant is not placed to sleep with a bottle, bib, or anything attached to their pacifier.



In addition:

- **Pacifier use:** Pacifier use is a parent choice, from the time it is offered to the time use is discontinued. If the parent agrees, consider offering a clean, dry pacifier when placing the infant down to sleep for naps or at night.

Nothing should be attached to the pacifier, including strings, cords or stuffed animals.

The pacifier does not need to be re-inserted if it falls out, and more than one pacifier is allowed in the sleeping environment. If the infant refuses the pacifier, he or she should not be forced to take it. For breastfed infants, delay pacifier use until 1 month of age to ensure good onset of breastfeeding practices.

- **Teething Jewelry:** Amber teething jewelry are not allowed on children under 3 years as they pose a choking and strangulation risk.
- **Written Policy:** Develop and follow a policy regarding safe sleep in your child care program.

Discuss your policy with parents before enrollment.

Have all staff and parents of infants sign a copy of the policy.

Provide Safe Sleep related educational resource materials for families.

- **Check for Recalls:** Develop a schedule to check for recalls of infant products on the Consumer Product Safety Commission website: <http://www.cpsc.gov>.





Does your crib meet safety standards?

- Cribs should have firm mattresses that fit the interior of the crib (meaning there are no gaps where the infant can become trapped).
- The only thing that should be in the crib is a tight fitted sheet.
- Although bumper pads and comforters look cute, they are unnecessary suffocation hazards.
- Similarly, blankets and stuffed animals are also potential suffocation hazards. Even chenille sheets are a risk, since they sometimes do not fit tightly to the mattress and little fingers can pull them up easily.
- From the Federal Rule: All family child care homes (licensed or license-exempt), child care centers and unlicensed registered child care ministries must use cribs compliant with Consumer Product Safety Commission standards:

"beginning June 28, 2011, all cribs manufactured and sold (including resale) must comply with new and improved federal safety standards. The new rules, which apply to full-size and non-full-size cribs, prohibit the manufacture or sale of traditional drop-side rail cribs, strengthen crib slats and mattress supports, improve the quality of hardware and require more rigorous testing." CPSC's crib rule includes a standard for full-size cribs (16 CFR part 1219) and a standard for non-full-size cribs (16 CFR part 1220)."



**For additoinal assistance and resources
contact the SPARK Help Desk at
1-800-299-1627**