



DID YOU KNOW?

Each newborn is different. For the first month, your baby may sleep 18 of every 24 hours, then from 12 to 16 hours a day for the first year, waking often. It takes babies time to learn the difference between day and night, but eventually they'll sleep for longer stretches. Most babies don't sleep through the night until they're a year old.

Sleep, Baby and You

You can help your baby sleep well by knowing that:

- babies wake frequently to connect and eat
- babies benefit from being close to their parents and caregivers while awake and asleep
- over time it will get easier to tell when your baby needs to nap

You can take care of yourself by (see [NESTS for Well-Being](#) in the appendix):

- setting aside enough nap time during the day so your baby is not overtired and restless at night
- creating a nighttime routine, such as a warm bath, rocking, singing and quiet time
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding to lull them back to sleep at night



TRY THIS

During the day, have your baby sleep in a light room with normal daytime noises. At night, signal that it's time to sleep: keep the room dark and quiet.



HOW TO

Support your baby's nighttime sleep

- Keep a regular daytime and bedtime schedule.
- Have a bedtime routine.
- Breastfeed or chestfeed at the start of the bedtime routine, about 15 minutes before settling your baby.
- Don't put them down to sleep with a bottle.
- Sing to them before you put them into bed.
- Make the room quiet and dark.
- Stroke them or hold their hand while they lie in their crib.
- Be consistent. Follow the same routine for naps and at night.

Falling Back to Sleep

Your baby's sleep patterns may change often in the first year. They'll start each night with a few hours of very deep sleep, followed by several hours of lighter sleep. During light sleep, they may partly wake many times and want to connect with you and be soothed. They'll likely want you to breastfeed or chestfeed, pat, rock or cuddle them. Waking frequently also protects babies from sleep-related infant death.

For more information, see:

- **Safer Sleep for My Baby** – available through HealthLink BC, or ask your health care provider. To learn more, visit: healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/safer-sleep-for-my-baby.pdf
- **Honouring our Babies** – focuses on the strengths of Indigenous knowledge, cultural values and practices using a two-eyed seeing approach. To learn more, visit: perinataleservicesbc.ca/Documents/Resources/Aboriginal/SafeSleep/HOB_SafeSleep_IllustratedCards.pdf

Safer Sleeping



DID YOU KNOW?

For the first 6 months, the safest place for your baby to sleep is on their back at nighttime and at nap time, in their own crib or bassinet, in your room.

Sleep-related infant death can happen by accident (usually when a baby is smothered or suffocated) or by **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome** (SIDS or “crib death”) – the unexplained death of a healthy baby while sleeping. Help your baby sleep safely by:

- putting them down to sleep on their back on a firm surface
- sleeping in the same room as your baby for at least the first 6 months
- making your home smoke-free
- keeping your baby warm but not hot
- breastfeeding or chestfeeding
- keeping pillows, toys, heavy or weighted blankets and pets out of your baby’s bed
- not swaddling your baby for sleep
- learning about bedsharing safety as sleeping with your baby can happen intentionally or unintentionally
- not sleeping with your baby on a couch, sofa or recliner
- using slings, carriers and wraps safely for daytime sleep



DID YOU KNOW?

Use stuffed toys for playtime, not sleep time. Putting them in the crib can block your baby’s breathing.



BE AWARE

A car seat is not a safe place for your baby to sleep. They could suffocate if their body gets into the wrong position. If your baby falls asleep in the car, check on them regularly. Once you get to your destination, move them to a safe sleep space.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Always put your baby down to sleep on their back, and if you find them sleeping on their tummy, turn them over onto their back again. Once they can roll easily from back to front and back again (usually at around 5 to 6 months), you no longer have to turn them over.



DID YOU KNOW?

Protective Factors for Safer Sleeping

- Stopping or reducing smoking (before pregnancy is best).
- Breastfeeding or chestfeeding for 6 months or more helps prevent sleep-related infant death because it helps boost a baby’s immune system. The more you breastfeed or chestfeed the greater the protection. Any amount of human milk will help keep your baby healthy.
- Routine immunizations.

You can create a safer sleep environment for your baby and reduce the risk of overheating, suffocation and sleep-related death:

	What's Safest?	What is Unsafe?
Bed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Crib, cradle or bassinet that has been approved by Health Canada (ask your health care provider if you're unsure) ✓ Talk with your health care provider about other safe alternatives. Even a cardboard box, a drawer or a laundry basket can work ✓ Firm adult mattress with a parent or caregiver – only if baby is healthy, full-term and breastfeeding or chestfeeding (visit HealthLink BC Safer Sleep for my Baby at healthlinkbc.ca/pregnancy-parenting/parenting-babies-0-12-months/baby-safety/safer-sleep-my-baby) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Drop-side crib (banned for sale since 2016) ✗ Co-sleeper crib that attaches to your bed ✗ Folding crib without double locks ✗ Damaged crib or one made before 1986 ✗ Car seat ✗ Alone in an adult bed ✗ Couch or chair
Mattress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Firm mattress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Soft surface (couch, pillow-top mattress, air mattress, beanbag, waterbed) ✗ Torn mattress ✗ Mattress more than 15 cm (6 inches) thick (about the length of your hand) ✗ Gaps of more than 3 cm (1½ inches, or about 2 finger widths) between mattress and crib frame
Bedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Light blanket, sleeper or sleep sack – without buttons or other parts that could come off and choke your baby. Make sure sleep sack's arm and neck holes aren't so large that your baby can slip down into it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Heavy blankets, weighted blankets and sleep sacks, quilts, duvets ✗ Pillows ✗ Bumper pads ✗ Sheepskins ✗ Plastic sheets ✗ Top sheet ✗ Toys (including stuffed animals) ✗ Commercial wedges and positioning devices for babies
Clothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Sleeper and light blanket, or blanket-thickness sleeper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Heavy clothing ✗ Hats ✗ Swaddling
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Room sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Pets in bed with baby ✗ Sharing a bed with an adult who has been drinking alcohol or taking medication or other substances that makes them sleepy

Room Sharing

What is room sharing?

Sleeping in the same room as your baby, but not in the same bed.

Is it recommended?

Yes. Room sharing is recommended for the first 6 months.

Why?

It can calm your baby and reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death.



DID YOU KNOW?

If you have more than one baby, it's safest to have them in their own sleep spaces. If they share the same crib, put them head to head, not side by side.



Bedsharing

What is bedsharing?

Sleeping in the same bed with your baby.

Is it recommended?

Bedsharing is an option for some healthy, full-term breastfeeding or chestfeeding babies, but it is unsafe for others.

Why?

The safest place for your baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in their own safe sleep space in your room. But some families prefer to bedshare for cultural reasons, feelings of safety or to support breastfeeding or chestfeeding. And some find that they end up bedsharing even if they hadn't planned to. Learn more about safety and bedsharing. See Safer Sleep for My Baby: healthlinkbc.ca/sites/default/files/safer-sleep-for-my-baby.pdf#page=3



DANGER

Bedsharing is especially risky for some babies. Never share a bed if:

- your baby was born prematurely or weighed less than 2½ kg (5½ lb) at birth, or
- you or your partner(s):
 - smoke, or if you smoked while pregnant
 - have taken any substances that might make you sleep more heavily, like alcohol, medicine, cannabis or other drugs

Have another adult available to look after your baby if you're drinking alcohol or using any substances.

Talk with your health care provider about how to balance your family's wishes with the risks of bedsharing. And if you do choose to share a bed, do so as safely as possible. Ensure:

- ✓ Your baby is far away from pillows, blankets and duvets.
- ✓ Your baby is on their back.
- ✓ Your baby isn't swaddled.
- ✓ The mattress is on the floor to reduce the risk of a fall.
- ✓ The mattress is firm (no waterbeds, air mattresses, pillowtops or feather beds).
- ✓ The baby is on the outside of the bed, not between adults.
- ✓ There's space around the bed so the baby can't get trapped between the mattress and the wall or a side table.
- ✓ The adults in the bed both know that the baby is in the bed and are comfortable with it.
- ✓ Any long hair is tied back so it can't get wrapped around the baby's neck.
- ✓ No older children or pets are in the bed.



BE AWARE

It's normal for babies to feed often during the night, so some parents find themselves bedsharing. Most parents who breastfeed or chestfeed in bed will naturally sleep in a "C" shape – facing their baby with their knees up under baby's feet and their arm above baby's head. This protects the baby from moving down under the covers or up under the pillow. Talk to your health care provider about sleep positions that can help you rest and keep your baby safe.

Swaddling

Is it recommended?

No. It's safest not to swaddle your baby for sleep.

Why not?

Tight swaddling may cause your baby to overheat, which may put them at risk for sleep-related infant death, chest infections and hip problems. Or they can get stuck on their stomach and be unable to move into a safer position. Swaddling in the early days may lead to less breastfeeding or chestfeeding and slower weight gain for your baby. Preterm babies and babies exposed to substances may need swaddling as part of their care while in the hospital. But it's safest to stop swaddling once your baby is home.

Try This:

Try using a sleep sack instead of swaddling with a blanket. If a sleep sack is used a blanket is not needed.

- Choose a light-weight sleep sack that is the right size for your baby. Make sure it fits properly around the neck and armholes. If it's too big, your baby's head can slip down inside the sack, which can cause your baby to overheat or suffocate (for example, it should never cover your baby's nose or mouth).
- Weighted sleep sacks and weighted blankets are **not safe** for children under 2 years old because they may become trapped under these items or they may find it hard to move or breathe, especially if the blanket covers their face or nose.

Some families may choose to swaddle their baby to sleep, for cultural or other reasons. If you choose to swaddle, you can keep your baby safer by:

- putting your baby to sleep on their back
- only swaddling from the shoulders down, not over the face or head
- swaddling loosely enough that you can fit 2 fingers between the blanket and your baby's chest
- using a light cotton blanket
- checking that your baby's not hot or sweaty
- keeping the swaddle loose around your baby's hips and making sure they can bend and move their legs like a frog
- swaddling only when a caregiver is watching to protect your baby from rolling over
- not swaddling if your baby resists
- unbundling your baby during feedings so they can shift their position as needed
- not swaddling after 2 to 3 months or once your baby shows signs of rolling over or is able to move the blanket themselves

