

## QUICK FACTS

### WHAT WE KNOW TO BE TRUE

- There is no known “cause” of SIDS but there are many known risk factors that we can reduce.
- The rate of SIDS is higher in First Nations communities.
- SIDS can strike any family, at any time of the day or night, in any season.
- SIDS usually happens during sleep or napping.
- There seems to be no pain or suffering involved for the victim.
- Babies at higher risk for SIDS include:
  - babies up to 6 months,
  - boy babies,
  - babies of teen mothers,
  - premature and low birth weight babies,
  - twins and triplets.



### TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SIDS, PLEASE NEVER DO THESE THINGS:

- **Never smoke inside the house, or let others do so.** Avoid exposure to tobacco smoke or second-hand smoke during pregnancy and after birth.
- **Never put your baby to sleep facing down or on her/his side.** Always “look up to our ancestors”!
- **Never put your baby to sleep on a soft or cluttered sleeping surface.** Avoid cushions, pillows, bumper pads, loose blankets, duvets, couches, soft mattresses, lambskins, beanbags, waterbeds, stuffed toys, etc. These may trap carbon dioxide and cut the flow of oxygen to your baby.
- **Never overdress or overbundle your baby for sleep.** Dress your baby with the same number of layers as you are wearing.
- **Never overheat your home:** keep it at around 20–21 degrees Celsius, not more.
- **Never share a bed with your baby if you smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs.**
- **Never let younger children share a bed with your baby.**

*By avoiding these risk factors for SIDS we can make the circle safer for our babies.*

### RISK FACTORS ARE NOT CAUSES

While we cannot prevent or predict SIDS, we can try to reduce the risks.

Sadly, even if we follow all these guidelines, there is still no guarantee that our baby will be safe from SIDS.

If a family you know suffers the tragedy of SIDS, don't search for “causes” or explanations. Remember that SIDS is no one's fault.

When a baby leaves the circle, comfort the family on their grieving journey.



### REMEMBER: LOOK UP TO OUR ANCESTORS



References:  
[www.sids-network.org](http://www.sids-network.org) • [www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca) • [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/babies-bebes/sids-smsn](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/babies-bebes/sids-smsn)  
• [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/prenatal/sids\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/dca-dea/prenatal/sids_e.html) • [www.sidscanada.org](http://www.sidscanada.org)

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### REDUCE THE RISK OF SIDS (SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME)

# LOOK UP to our ancestors



*Whisper “look up to our ancestors” when you put your baby down to sleep. This will remind you to place your baby on her/his back to sleep, and so help reduce the risk of SIDS.*

## WHAT IS SIDS?

### WHAT IS SIDS?

SIDS is the sudden, unexpected and unexplained death of a healthy baby before one year of age.

We call it SIDS when there is no evidence that a baby was sick, hurt, poisoned, choked, suffocated, etc. No exact cause of death can be found even after a full medical investigation.

### HOW MANY BABIES SUDDENLY LEAVE THE CIRCLE?

- SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies between the ages of one month and one year. About 90% of SIDS deaths happen before six months old.
- Each week in Canada, about 3 babies die of SIDS.
- The SIDS rate is about three times higher in First Nations communities than in other communities in Canada. Why? Perhaps because many First Nations babies are exposed to more of the “risk factors” for SIDS.

A risk factor is something that increases a baby’s risk of dying from SIDS. It is not the same as a “cause”, but since we do not know the “causes” of SIDS, all we can do is try to reduce the risks.

### HOW CAN EACH OF US HELP?

We can all help by learning how to reduce the risks of SIDS, and by teaching others too!



### HOW CAN WE REDUCE THE RISK OF SIDS? TO MAKE THE CIRCLE SAFER FOR YOUR BABY, DO:

- **Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke, using alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy.** All these may affect your baby’s developing brain, and increase the risk for SIDS.
- **Keep your home smoke-free during pregnancy and after the birth.** All smokers must smoke **outside**. (Smoking in the bathroom, furnace room, enclosed porch, etc. is not a safe option.)
- **Breastfeed as long as possible.** Breast milk is best, and may prevent infections that trigger SIDS. Ideally, a baby should breastfeed for a year or more.
- **Take your baby for regular health checks & immunizations at the clinic.**
- **Always place your baby to “look up to our ancestors” for sleeping.** This prevents your baby from re-breathing exhaled carbon dioxide trapped in the bedding. (At around 6 months, babies may roll onto their sides or tummies during sleep. That’s OK.)
- **Use a firm, flat, uncluttered place for your baby to sleep.** Soft bedding, stuffed toys, loose blankets, pillows, bumper pads, etc. can trap exhaled carbon dioxide that your baby will then re-breathe instead of oxygen.
- **Dress your baby to be warm, but not hot, for sleep. And don’t overheat your home in winter.** Signs of an overheated baby: sweating, damp hair, heat rash, fast breathing, restlessness.
- **Give your baby a pacifier to suck on during sleep.** Start this at about 4 weeks old when your baby is breastfeeding well.
- **Place your baby to “look up” in a crib rather than in your bed if you are a smoker.** It increases the risk of SIDS if a smoker shares a bed with a baby.
- **Also, place your baby to “look up” in a crib rather than in your bed if you are over-tired, or have been using alcohol or other drugs.** Or ask another responsible adult to care for your baby while you sleep alone.
- **Educate elders, family members, babysitters etc. about all this so that all caregivers will know how to reduce the risks of SIDS.** A baby who normally sleeps looking up but is then put to sleep face down is at an 18-20 times higher risk of SIDS.

