



SUNDHEDSSTYRELSEN



PREVENT COT DEATH

– and avoid plagiocephaly or flat head syndrome

To Parents

Engelsk

2011

Sundhedsstyrelsen
The Danish Health and Medicines Authority
Axel Heides Gade 1
2300 Copenhagen S
Tel.: 7222 7400
sst@sst.dk

PREVENT COT DEATH – and avoid plagiocephaly or flat head syndrome

To Parents

© Sundhedsstyrelsen

The Danish Health and Medicines Authority

1st edition, 2013

Technical editors:

Annette Poulsen, health visitor, MSP, IBCLC
Christine Brot, MD, Ph.D.

Layout: Rosendahls a/s

Graphics: Keld Petersen

Photos: Heidi Maxmiling

Cot death in Denmark

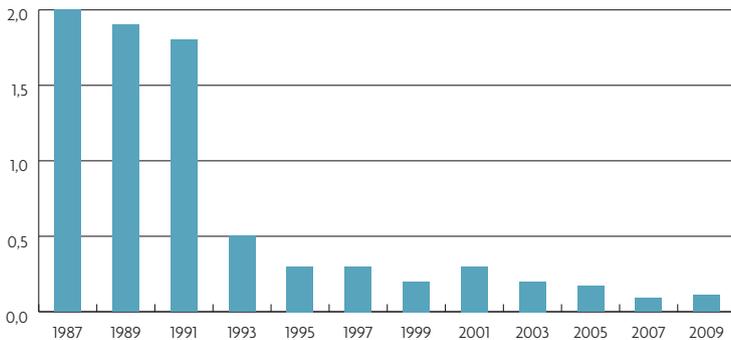
Fortunately, cot death occurs only rarely in Denmark. But each year, some infants die suddenly in their sleep, without having been seriously ill and for no obvious reason. This is known as “cot death” or “Sudden Infant Death Syndrome” (SIDS).

It has been shown that three factors increase the risk of cot death: the infant sleeps on its stomach or side, the infant is exposed to tobacco smoke, and the infant is too hot while sleeping.

Like in many other countries, the Danish Health and Medicines Authority has therefore since 1991 recommended that:

1. Babies must always sleep on their back
2. The mother must avoid smoking during the pregnancy, and the baby must not be exposed to tobacco smoke after birth
3. Parents must ensure that the baby is not too hot while sleeping.

Number of sudden infant deaths per 1,000 live-born infants



The number of infants who die unexpectedly in their sleep has fallen from approximately 120 infants per year to approximately 10–15 infants per year as a result of these changed recommendations.

3 SIMPLE TIPS

1. Always put the baby to sleep on its back

If the baby sleeps on its stomach or side, there is a significantly greater risk of cot death.

Once the baby is able to turn over and does so while sleeping, you can let the baby continue sleeping on its stomach.

Your baby may only sleep on its stomach on your chest if you are awake yourself.

Some infants with congenital diseases have to sleep on their stomachs. Your paediatrician will tell you if this is the case.



2. Avoid smoking

Infants who are exposed to tobacco smoke both in the womb and after birth are at significantly greater risk of cot death.

Therefore, avoid smoking while pregnant and avoid smoking indoors after the child is born. This will reduce the risk of cot death.

3. Avoid letting the baby overheat while asleep

A baby who is too hot while sleeping is at greater risk of cot death. Therefore, your baby should not be perspiring while asleep. The best way to tell if an infant is too hot is by feeling the back of the neck or its chest at the front.

Make sure it is fairly cool, i.e. 18–20°C, where the baby is sleeping. If you have to open a window to keep the temperature below 20°C, make sure the baby is not lying in a draught.

Do not tuck your baby up too tightly in quilts and blankets for sleeping. Always remove the baby's outdoor clothing when you come indoors – even if it is sleeping. Sleeping indoors while wearing outdoor clothes is much too hot for the baby.

If your baby is ill and has a high temperature, it should wear only light clothing and sleep with only a sheet as a covering so that the heat can dissipate.



A SAFE PLACE TO SLEEP

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in its own bed in the same room as the parents.

The mattress should be relatively firm and must extend all the way to the edges of the cot.

The baby should sleep under a light baby quilt which is the right size for the cot, and which the baby can kick away.

The baby should not have a pillow; this will make it easier for the baby to move

its head while sleeping. Also avoid loose blankets, toys and anything else that the baby could become entangled with while sleeping.



It is a good idea to lay your baby down to sleep closest to the foot end of the cot.

Sleeping with baby?

If you choose to let your baby sleep in your bed, let it sleep between one of you and the baby's own bed. Make sure the baby cannot fall between the two beds.

The baby should sleep under its own light baby quilt at one side of your bed.

The baby should have as much free space as if it were lying in its own cot or bed.



Older brothers and sisters as well as pets should not sleep in the same bed as the baby and the parents. Young children and pets often sleep fitfully and can therefore take up a lot of space in the bed.

PREVENT PLAGIOCEPHALY OR FLAT HEAD SYNDROME

Babies can develop plagiocephaly or flat head syndrome if they are also left lying on their backs a lot when they are awake. This can be prevented:

- Let your baby lie on its stomach as much as possible when it is awake and not being carried in your arms. This also encourages the development of the baby's motor skills.
- Roll your baby around on its stomach and leave it lying for as long as possible during each nappy change.



- Make sure your baby's head does not always turn to the same side when the baby is sleeping on its back.



- Be sure to change, play with and talk to your baby from both the right-hand and left-hand side.



Carry your baby on your right and left arm at different times and get the baby to turn its head both ways – remember this, too, when burping your baby.

- If your baby is bottle-fed, let the baby alternate between your right and left arm when feeding.
- Only use the car seat for transport. Sitting up for too long at a time is not good for young babies.



Talk to your health visitor if your child is all the same showing signs of plagiocephaly or flat head syndrome – she will be able to advise you.

REMEMBER THESE THREE SIMPLE TIPS TO HELP PREVENT COT DEATH

- Always put the baby to sleep on its back
- Avoid smoking during the pregnancy, and do not expose your baby to tobacco smoke after birth
- Avoid letting your baby overheat while asleep

REMEMBER these three simple tips, too, so that your baby will not develop plagiocephaly or flat head syndrome:

- Get your baby used to lying on its stomach as much as possible while awake – right from birth
- Make sure that your baby's head will rest alternately on the left and right side when sleeping
- Be sure to stimulate your baby from both sides when it is awake – this helps the baby not to develop a preference for one side, and prevents plagiocephaly

Talk to your health visitor if you are concerned about the shape of your baby's head.

www.sst.dk

Sundhedsstyrelsen
The Danish Health and Medicines Authority
Axel Heides Gade 1
2300 Copenhagen S
Tel.: 7222 7400
sst@sst.dk

www.sst.dk