

FIMR NEWSLETTER

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Patient Education Points:

You should not share a bed with your baby if you:

- Have taken any drugs (legal or illegal) which could make you sleepy or affect your ability to be aroused
- Have been drinking alcohol
- Are extremely tired
- Smoke

Healthy babies should be placed on their backs to sleep

Never sleep with an infant on a sofa, recliner, futon, or a cushioned chair

Do not place a baby on any soft surface such as a waterbed, bean bag, or sagging mattress

A crib should meet current safety standards and have a firm, tight fitting mattress with tight fitted sheets

The sleep environment should be free of quilts, comforters, pillows, and stuffed animals

Place a baby with his/her feet at the foot of the crib, with a thin blanket tucked around the crib mattress, and extending only as far as the baby's chest (See Photo)

Do not place a baby on a bed with a space between the adjacent wall, the baby could become trapped or smothered

Babies under 24 months should not sleep with siblings or other children

BEDSHARING - A RISK FACTOR FOR SUDDEN INFANT DEATH

In San Joaquin County during the year 2004, seven infant deaths have occurred in beds in which infants were bedsharing / co-sleeping with parents, caregivers, or siblings. Although asphyxia was not listed as the cause of death in six of these cases, potentially unsafe sleeping practices were noted.

Medical literature has identified circumstances in which bedsharing is clearly unsafe and must be strongly discouraged. This includes circumstances in which the caregiver's normal arousal response is impaired due to the effects of alcohol, drugs (either prescription or non-prescription), extreme fatigue, or illness. There are also dangers associated with infants sharing a bed with siblings.

Studies also reveal that race/ethnicity appears to have the strongest association with bedsharing. Black, Asian, and Hispanic mothers were 4-6 times more likely to bedshare than white mothers.



It must be noted that locally and nationally, ethnic disparities in bedsharing deaths have occurred. These deaths have been seen twice as often in African-American infants as in other ethnic groups. Deaths on non-standard sleep surfaces e.g. couches, chairs, and daybeds are also noted to be higher in African-Americans.

The October 2003 issue of *Pediatrics* reported the risk of suffocation was approximately 40 times higher for infants in adult beds com-

pared with those in cribs.

Bedsharing is a complex issue and includes many factors such as breastfeeding, cultural traditions, and finances. Bedsharing is not an inherently dangerous behavior, however, deaths due to unsafe bedsharing are preventable through public awareness and education.

Recommendations for safe bedsharing are listed in the left hand column.

Health care providers are encouraged to discuss these recommendations frequently with parents and caregivers throughout the infant's first year of life.

To assist your agency with promoting safe sleeping, please contact the Maternal Child Health Division of Public Health Services for copies of the brochure "*Bedsharing—Babies Sleeping Safely*" at 1-800-698-2304.

SAFE SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

In those circumstances where bedsharing would be deemed unsafe, the use of a bassinette or crib could be considered a lifesaving measure for an infant. Bassinettes cost between \$35 and \$100, and cribs range from \$85 to \$350. Both can be purchased at many retailers including Walmart, Costco,

Babies-R-Us, and Burlington Coat Factory. Special bassinets are available that attach to the bed and allow a safe co-sleeping environment through www.armsreach.com for \$140. When purchasing a crib, either new or used, parents should look for a Consumer Product Safety Commission or a Juvenile

Product Manufactures Association label.

It is suggested that philanthropic organizations should consider purchasing and distributing cribs to low-income, high risk families.