

# SAFE SLEEP FOR INFANTS

## Facts about infant sleep deaths in Utah

- Most deaths of newborn infants that come home from the hospital, yet die within the first year of life, are sleep-related.<sup>1</sup>
- 100 babies died unexpectedly between 2003 and 2005 in Utah when the baby was put down to sleep or when left alone and not checked upon for an extended period of time.<sup>1</sup>



## 2003-2005 UTAH INFANT SLEEP DEATH DATA

### SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

#### WHO

- SIDS is more common among boys than girls, however male and female infants are equally likely to die in other sleep situations.<sup>2</sup>
- Younger infants are at greatest risk of sleep related deaths—of the 100 deaths only 4 were older than 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

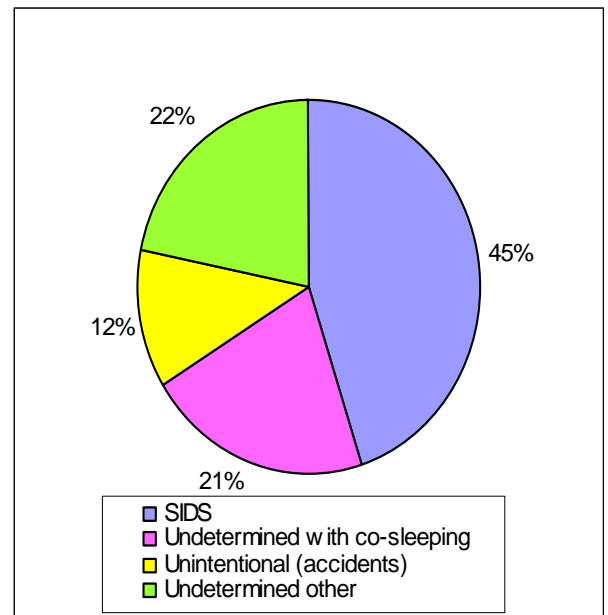
#### HOW

- 45% died due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).<sup>1</sup> SIDS deaths are unexplained deaths in what appears to have been a safe sleep environment where there was nothing wrong with the infant that might have potentially played a role in the death.
- Research shows that babies who usually sleep on their tummies are 6-9 times more likely to die from SIDS.<sup>2</sup>
- 43% of the deaths had no specific cause of death, although the presence of an unsafe sleep environment could not be ruled out<sup>1</sup>
  - 21% died in circumstances where co-sleeping was present but it could not be determined that co-sleeping did not play a role in the infant's death.<sup>1</sup>
  - 22% died in circumstances where co-sleeping was not present and it could not be determined that some other unsafe sleep environmental risk did not play a role in the infant's death.<sup>1</sup>
- 12% died from accidents including: parents rolling on top of infants, injuries involving the baby becoming wedged between the mattress and crib rails or between the mattress of an adult bed and an adjacent wall.<sup>1</sup>

#### WHERE

- One third of the 100 Utah deaths took place: in adult beds, waterbeds, bouncy chairs, car seats, in cribs with soft bedding materials or with an improperly fitting mattress, and on sofas.<sup>1</sup>
- An additional third of these deaths took place while the baby was sleeping in the same bed with parent/s or siblings, or when the baby was sharing a crib with a twin.<sup>1</sup>

### Causes of Utah Infant Sleep Deaths (N=100)



### DID YOU KNOW?

For infants, a crib with a tightly fitting firm mattress is the recommended sleep surface. The mattress should have a fitted crib sheet and the infant should be clothed in a blanket sleeper so that the use of a blanket inside the crib is unnecessary.

Despite these guidelines, at least two-thirds of the Utah babies who experienced sleep deaths were in unsafe sleep environments.

From 2003-2005...

- Four babies were between 12 and 18 months old, the rest were all under one year in age.<sup>1</sup>
- In Utah, 1 in 5 infant sleep deaths occurred when the baby was being cared for by someone other than a parent.<sup>1</sup>
- Many deaths occur when infants who sleep on their backs at home are then put to sleep on their stomach by another caregiver.<sup>1</sup>
- Several Utah babies have died from strangulation and wedge injuries sustained while they were attempting to climb out of the crib.<sup>1</sup>

## Why Should I Set Rules About How Infants Sleep?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that the safest sleep position for infants is on their backs. The AAP also recommends that infants not bed share during sleep. Yet despite these recommendations, a review of 2003-2005 Utah infant sleep deaths revealed that a third of these infants were co-sleeping. It is clear from an analysis of the data that AAP recommendations are not reaching some caregivers and/or not taken seriously.

### SHARING POLICY WITH PARENTS

As a healthcare provider talk to parents and family members about placing babies to sleep on their backs.<sup>3</sup>

- Put your infant sleep position policy in writing and give a copy to parents.
- Begin the conversation by asking about the baby's sleep position at home.
- Explain that sleep in a supine position reduces the babies' risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.



### PREVENTING INFANT SLEEP DEATHS

The American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>4</sup> recommends the following to reduce the risk of SIDS in the general population:

- Infants should be placed for sleep in a supine position (wholly on their back) for every sleep.
- A firm crib mattress with a fitted crib sheet is the recommended sleeping surface
- Commercial devices marketed to reduce SIDS risk (positioners, crib wedges) should not be used.
- Soft objects such as pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and loose bedding should be kept out of the crib.
- Infants should not spend excessive time in car seat carriers and bouncers.
- A separate but proximate sleeping environment (a crib, bassinet, or cradle that conforms to the Safety Standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission -CPSC) is recommended.
- Co-sleepers (infant beds that attach to the mother's bed) provide easy access for breastfeeding but safety standards have not been established by CPSC.
- Infants should be lightly clothed for sleep, and the bedroom temperature should be comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Pacifier use has been associated with reduced risk of SIDS and recent evidence suggests that pacifier use does not inhibit established breastfeeding or cause dental complications.
- Home monitors should not be used as a strategy to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Encourage "tummy time" when infant is awake and observed to avoid development of the "flat head syndrome."
- Alter the supine head position during sleep; e.g., changing the orientation of the infant to the door of the room.
- Smoking during pregnancy and infant's exposure to second-hand smoke should be avoided.