

Where should babies sleep?

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An average of six babies die unexpectedly each week. Sudden infant death syndrome is the predominant cause but many deaths are recorded as unascertained. Medical experts continue to research the causes of these infant deaths, and advice to parents is constantly being evaluated and revised in an attempt to reduce the numbers even further. Bed sharing or co-sleeping is a topic that triggers debate and conflict of advice between health professionals, which may leave parents confused. Bed sharing is known to be dangerous when the mother smokes but there are other factors which are also dangerous and need to be considered before an informed decision is made. This article reviews some of the most relevant research in order to give health professionals the knowledge needed to aid parents in making their decision. Three main areas were studied because of their relevance to bed-sharing and sudden infant death syndrome. These were sleep position, smoking and alcohol consumption and breastfeeding. Recent concerns highlighting sofa sleeping are also considered.