



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **October is SIDS Awareness Month**

### **Safe Kids Champaign County Offers Sleep Safety Tips**

**Champaign** — October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month, and Safe Kids Champaign County urges parents and caregivers to remember the phrase “back to sleep”: babies need to sleep on their backs, face up, to minimize the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. SIDS is still not fully understood, but it is estimated that 900 cases each year involve soft bedding and suffocation in a crib or other sleeping environment. Soft bedding and mattresses have also been linked to more than 100 cases of fatal suffocation in playpens since 1988.

“Babies need to sleep face up, on their backs, until they’re old enough to turn themselves over,” says Susan Butler, Safe Kids Champaign County Coordinator. “The phrase ‘back to sleep’ has saved hundreds of lives. Within 10 years after public health professionals started teaching new parents to lay a baby on his or her back to sleep, the death rate from SIDS was cut in half.”

Most infant suffocation — 60 percent — happens in a crib or bed. Babies can suffocate when their faces become wedged against or buried in a mattress, pillow, infant cushion or other soft bedding or when someone in the same bed rolls over onto them.

“It’s tempting to hold your baby in bed with you, but think very carefully about the latest sleeping guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics,” says Butler. “It’s risky to share a bed or sofa with a baby, especially if you’re tired, you’ve been drinking alcohol or you’re taking medication.”

The AAP announced findings in 2005 concluding that the safest place for a baby to sleep is in the same room as a parent, but in a separate crib near the parent’s bed. Sleeping with a baby on a sofa or chair is especially discouraged.

The AAP also found a higher risk of SIDS in babies with a high body temperature and recommends that the air temperature in the nursery should be “comfortable for a lightly clothed adult” and the baby should not be bundled in too much clothing. Also, there is some evidence of a higher risk of SIDS in babies who are exposed to secondhand smoke.

Based on the AAP’s report, Safe Kids Champaign County also recommends these precautions for babies who cannot yet turn themselves over:

- The sleeping surface should be a firm crib mattress and should not have pillows, quilts or stuffed animals on it. For warmth, use infant sleepwear or crib-sized blankets tucked under the mattress so they do not reach above the baby’s chest; do not use adult-sized blankets.
- Offer a clean pacifier to the baby at bedtime, but do not put it back in if it falls out of the baby’s mouth. There is evidence that pacifiers help protect sleeping babies from SIDS, though pediatricians don’t know why.
- Crib bumpers are not necessary, but if used, they should be firm, thin and securely tied to the crib.
- Do not rely on any consumer products or medical devices to prevent SIDS. No such product has been shown to be effective, and some have not been shown to be safe.
- To prevent the baby’s head from developing a flat spot in back, allow plenty of “tummy time” for the baby while awake and constantly supervised. Don’t leave a baby in a carrier or bouncer all day.

“It’s worth repeating: lay your baby *back* to sleep,” says Susan Butler. “The single most powerful step you can take to reduce the risk of SIDS is to make sure babies always sleep on their backs, facing up, on a firm surface without soft objects around.”

For more information about SIDS, airway obstruction and nursery safety, call (217) 531-2925 or visit [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org). Safe Kids Champaign County works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Safe Kids Champaign County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Champaign County was founded in 1995 and is led by the Champaign Urbana Public Health District.

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