



Learn about SIDS
before you have to.



October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Awareness Month

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the unexpected, sudden death of a child under age one. An autopsy does not show an explainable cause of death.

Causes:

The following may increase the risk of SIDS:

- ✚ Sleeping on the stomach.
- ✚ Being around cigarette smoke while in the womb or after being born.
- ✚ Sleeping in the same bed as their parents (co-sleeping).
- ✚ Soft bedding in the crib.
- ✚ Multiple birth babies (being a twin, triplet, etc.).
- ✚ Premature birth.
- ✚ Having a brother or sister who had SIDS.
- ✚ Mothers who smoke or use illegal drugs.
- ✚ Being born to a teen mother.
- ✚ Short time period between pregnancies.
- ✚ Late or no prenatal care.
- ✚ Living in poverty situations.
- ✚ While studies show that babies with the above risk factors are more likely to be affected, the impact or importance of each factor is not well-defined or understood.

Risk factors:

Although sudden infant death syndrome can strike any infant, researchers have identified several factors that may increase a baby's risk. They include:

- ✚ Sex. Boys are more likely to die of SIDS.
- ✚ Age. Infants are most vulnerable during the second and third months of life.
- ✚ Race. For reasons that aren't well-understood American Indian or Eskimo infants are more likely to develop SIDS.
- ✚ Family history. Babies who've had siblings or cousins die of SIDS are at higher risk of SIDS.
- ✚ Secondhand smoke. Babies who live with smokers have a higher risk of SIDS.
- ✚ Being premature. Both being born early and having low birth weight increase your baby's chances of SIDS.

Maternal risk factors:

During pregnancy, the risk of SIDS is also affected by the mother, especially if she:

- ✚ Is younger than 20.
- ✚ Smokes cigarettes.
- ✚ Uses drugs or alcohol.
- ✚ Has inadequate prenatal care.

Prevention:

- ✚ Always put a baby to sleep on its back.
- ✚ Put babies on a firm surface (such as in the crib) to sleep.
- ✚ Let babies sleep in the same room (NOT the same bed) as parents.
- ✚ Avoid soft bedding materials.
- ✚ Make sure the room temperature is not too hot.
- ✚ Offer the baby a pacifier when going to sleep.
- ✚ Do not use breathing monitors or products marketed as ways to reduce SIDS. Research found that these devices do not help prevent SIDS.

Other recommendations from SIDS experts:

- ✚ Keep your baby in a smoke-free environment.
- ✚ Mothers should avoid alcohol and drug use during and after pregnancy.
- ✚ Breastfeed your baby, if possible. Breastfeeding reduces some upper respiratory infections that may influence the development of SIDS.
- ✚ Never give honey to a child younger than 1 year old. Honey in very young children may cause infant botulism, which may be associated with SIDS.

Prevention:

There's no guaranteed way to prevent SIDS, but you can help your baby sleep more safely by following these tips:

- ✚ Place your baby to sleep resting on his or her back, rather than on the stomach or side.
- ✚ Keep the crib as bare as possible. Use a firm mattress and avoid placing your baby on thick, fluffy padding, such as lambskin or a thick quilt.
- ✚ Don't overheat baby.
- ✚ Baby should sleep alone. A baby can also suffocate if a sleeping parent accidentally rolls over and covers the baby's nose and mouth.
- ✚ Breast-feed your baby, if possible. Breast-feeding for at least six months lowers the risk of SIDS.

Coping and support:

After losing a baby to SIDS, getting emotional support is critical. You may feel guilt as well as grief. Your doctor may be able to recommend a support group in your area. Talking to a trusted friend, counselor or clergy member may also help.

Communicate your feelings:

- ✚ If you can, let friends and family know how you're feeling. People want to help, but they may not know how to approach you.
- ✚ As the baby's parents, be as open as possible with each other. Counseling may help some couples understand and express their feelings.
- ✚ Allow time for healing.
- ✚ You're dealing with a devastating loss. Healing takes time.

Reference Links:

- ✚ <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sudden-infant-death-syndrome/basics/prevention/con-20020269>
- ✚ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmedhealth/PMH0002533/>

For any enquiry or assistance please contact: wellness@medicaretpa.co.in

Disclaimer: No information contained here should be relied on in making health decisions. Always check with your doctor or other health care provider.