

The Grandparent Guide: Safe Sleep, Sweet Dreams



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime

by Sarah MacLaughlin

Grandparents play a major role in raising the next generation. **Did you know that grandparents provide care for 24% of kids under 5 years old while their parents work?** If you're a grandma or grandpa in this role, you've probably noticed that a lot remains the same from one generation to the next. You're already an expert at raising young children. But you've probably also noticed that a few things have changed since you were a parent.



Here's the latest news on sleep safety for young children.

What you need to know:

- **It's recommended that babies up to 6 months old sleep in the same room with their parents in a crib, bassinette, or co-sleeper**—a three-sided crib that attaches to the parents' bed—**and always on a flat and firm surface.** Experts say car seats and swings should not be used for regular sleep. It's also not advisable to hold the baby while they sleep if there is any possibility you may fall asleep too.

- **Babies should always sleep on their backs.** All the time. This is a change from previous advice, but new research (see box) shows that this is the safest position for babies to sleep in. Foam positioners and wedges that claim to keep babies in “safer” positions are not recommended. Once babies are able to roll over on their own, you can allow them to sleep on their bellies.
- **Babies should also always sleep in a smoke-free environment.** Smoke in the house (or even on adults’ clothing) can cause irritation and breathing problems.
- **Babies should sleep without Teddy.** Babies should sleep without blankets, stuffed animals or loveys, pillows, foam wedges, and crib bumpers. In other words, the crib, bassinette, or co-sleeper should have only one thing inside—a sleeping baby!
- **So much baby gear for one little baby!** Many new items are quite useful— for example, sleep sacks are zip-on blankets for babies that keep them warm minus the danger of suffocation from a loose blanket. Video monitors and “white noise” machines that play music or heartbeat rhythms are nice, but not necessary. A regular baby monitor is all you need to tell you if baby needs you!

Research Says:

Since safe sleep recommendations (including “back to sleep”) were instituted in the U.S. more than 25 years ago, the rate of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) has declined by more than 50%.

National Institute of Health <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sts/about/SIDS/Pages/progress.aspx>



Your attention to your grandbaby’s sleep environment protects her from the risks of unsafe sleep. And your loving presence is a great gift to your grandchildren, as well as to their parents who are trusting you with their care. ZERO TO THREE has lots more [resources on sleep](#) to read and share. And be sure to check out our other [materials](#) created especially for grandparents.