

Hi. My name is Sharyn Parks Brown, here with my colleague Carrie Cottenham. We are both scientists in CDC's Maternal and Infant Health Branch which works to better understand sudden death in infants and ways to protect babies through safer sleep environments. We are both moms and we're here today in an actual nursery. And we're here to talk about safe sleep environments for babies.

You may not know that safe sleep environments are really important for the health and safety of babies, and this is important information not just for the parents but for any caregiver. So whether that be grandparents, childcare workers, babysitters, basically anyone who's going to be caring for an infant, this is important information for them to have.

So today we are going to be doing some demonstrations of the key features of the safe sleep environment, and we've got a baby doll here to help us with our demonstration. We've got some members of our team who are working behind the scenes to answer your questions, so feel free to type those in the chat box. We'll be answering those as we go along. And now we'll go ahead and get started with our demonstration.

Do you want to start us off, Carrie?

Sure. Let's start by talking about this crib. It's a really cute crib, but there are some things in it that can put your baby at risk for something called sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS for short. But first before we get into all that, Sharon, let's first talk about what's positive about this crib. The baby doll here has been laid to rest on her back.

Yes. So this is a really key point. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, the safest way for babies to be placed to sleep is on their backs. Now, a question we get pretty often is what happens if my baby can flip over. And the answer to that is, if your baby is capable of flipping themselves over, it's still recommended that you place the baby to sleep on his or her back. But if they do flip themselves over, it's okay at that point to leave them in that position.

Now let's talk about some other key features of this crib, Carrie.

Sure. The crib itself is great. Babies need their own sleep environment to sleep in like a crib, a bassinet or a portable crib. They should never share a sleep surface with another person, a child or even a twin. They need their own surface. The surface should also be firm, flat and level like this crib mattress. This crib mattress is great because it fits tightly up against the edge of the crib, and there's no chance that the baby can get wedged in any of the gaps.

So you might put your baby in angled devices such as car seats, strollers or this bouncy seat here, and these items are great for transporting your infant or for even playtime. But if your baby's sleeping, it needs to be moved -- he or she needs to be moved to a firm, flat level sleep surface like their own crib as soon as possible after falling asleep in the device.

So, now that we've talked about the makings of a safe sleep environment, Sharon, what can you tell everybody about breastfeeding and safe sleep?

So this is another really common question that comes up when we're talking about safe sleep environments. And we know that breastfeeding is great for both moms and babies, but we also know that it can be easy for moms to get sleepy right after or during the feeds, especially during those first couple of weeks and months when you're getting extremely tired and sleep-deprived. So the recommendation is that, if you do bring the baby to bed to breastfeed them, that you move them back to their own crib or bassinet as soon as possible before you go to sleep.

Now, there are a couple things you can do to help you with this. One of them is to have a partner or a friend or family member who may be with you to help you with that process. So that person can talk to you and, you know, tap you on the shoulder if they see you starting to nod off. Or they can also help by moving the baby back to their crib or bassinet if you do nod off. Now, that may leave you thinking, okay. Well, what if I'm by myself and I'm breastfeeding my baby? So in that scenario, if you don't have someone with you, just make sure if you bring the baby to bed to breastfeed and you do fall asleep that you just move them back to their crib or bassinet as soon as can after you wake up.

And there's one other thing to mention about the breastfeeding scenario is -- another one of the recommendations is that babies' cribs or bassinets be in the same room as the caregiver for at least the first six months, and this is for a couple of reasons. One, it helps facilitate those round-the-clock feedings, especially the late night feedings. If the crib is in the same room with the caregiver, it makes it easier to just hop out of bed, feed the baby, whether you're breastfeeding or bottle feeding and then put the baby back in their safe sleep surface. And that's the other reason that having them in the same room is important is that it helps ensure that you will move them back to their safe sleep surface when they're done feeding.

So we talked about breastfeeding and the firm flat surface. What else should we talk about here?

Yeah. Now we're ready to make this crib even safer by removing the soft items from it. The blankets, the stuffed animals and the bumper should all be removed from the crib. The only thing you need in a crib is a flat fitted sheet. Babies can get tangled in loose items; or soft objects can end up covering their nose and mouth, inhibiting their breathing. So make sure you remove this stuff from -- from the crib. You can use your blankets. They don't have to go on the floor. You can use them to decorate the room. You can hang them on the wall or place them on the floor for supervised tummy time, and your stuffed animals make great decorations or also great toys. But none of these items should be placed in the crib.

But now it's getting cold outside and parents are going to be worried about keeping their babies warm. What can we do to keep the baby warm without any blankets in the crib?

So this is also another question that comes up a lot when we're talking about safe sleep environments and removing the soft bedding. So there are a couple things we wanted to point out. The first is that babies don't actually have to have a lot of bedding on them. In fact, they only need one layer more than what an adult would wear in the same room to be comfortable. And it's also actually dangerous for babies to get too overheated. So signs that your baby may be getting overheated are if the baby is sweating. Or if you touch them on the chest here and it feels really hot, then the baby may actually be too warm and you may need to remove some layers.

But back to your question about how to keep the baby warm as we're moving into fall and the chillier months and we've removed all the blankets. Some of the things you can do to make sure your baby is still warm and cozy but sleeping safely are to use something called a sleep sack or a wearable blanket. So this baby is in a sleep sack here, and you can see she's got her toes all covered up; and she's able to be warm and cozy, but she's still able to see sleep safely.

So now you can see we've got a clean crib, firm fitted flat surface and this looks great. But I know we've covered a lot of information in a few short minutes. Do you want to summarize our key take-homes, Carry?

Sure, Sharon. The things that we want you to remember are to always place your baby on its back to sleep in their own sleep environment like a crib, a foldable crib or a bassinet. Make sure you removed all the soft and loose objects out of the crib just like we did. And, if you can, keep your baby in the same room as the caregiver for at least the first six months.

Thanks. So that is all we wanted to share with you today. Thank you again for joining us. Hopefully you've had some questions answered as we've gone along. If you were not able to get your question answered, please feel free to go ahead and type those in the chat box. We'll be working throughout the afternoon to answer any questions that we haven't gotten to. And, for more information, please go to [CDC.gov/sids](https://www.cdc.gov/sids).

Thanks.