

[IMAGE]

Prone to Problems

Reports of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in the U.S. have declined dramatically since measures in the 1994 National Institute of Child and Health and Human Development-sponsored "Back to Sleep" campaign convinced most parents to place their babies on their backs for sleeping. Persistent concerns of possible dangers (e.g., choking on vomit) have prevented some parents from adopting recommendations to place their infant on its back for sleeping, however; one in 10 infants is still placed on its stomach, or in a prone position, to sleep. Are these fears realistic, or merely myths?

Information on almost 4,000 infants that always were placed in the same position for sleep (back, front or side) was analyzed in this study from the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*. At one, three and six months of age, researchers asked the mother about the presence of symptoms like coughing, fever, trouble breathing or sleeping, and vomiting.

Infants placed to sleep on their backs were not at an increased risk for health problems. In fact, they were less likely to have fevers, stuffy noses or ear infections than infants placed to sleep on their stomachs or sides, and reportedly slept better. No back-sleepers were noted to choke on their vomit. Also, no symptoms were significantly more common in infants sleeping on their backs or sides than in infants sleeping prone.

Not only does placing your baby to sleep on his or her back reduce the chances for SIDS, it also appears to reduce the risk for other health problems found in infants. Research is more reliable than hearsay advice; be sure to always place your baby on his or her back at naptime.

Reference:

Hunt CE, Lesko SM, et al. Infant sleep position and associated health outcomes. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* 2003;157(5), pp. 469-474.

For more information on children's health, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/pediatrics.

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