

Bed-sharing

The safest place for infants to sleep for the first 6–12 months is in the same room as the caregiver, on their back and on their own sleep surface.

Many families around the world bed-share for at least some of the night with their infants. However, bed-sharing remains controversial in developed countries because of a concern about Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI). Nonetheless, the risk of SUDI appears to be related to certain unsafe circumstances in which bed-sharing occurs rather than bed-sharing itself.

Breastfeeding and bed-sharing mutually support each other. Mothers who bed-share with their infants tend to breastfeed longer and maintain exclusive breastfeeding longer than those who do not bed-share.

Parents who choose to bed-share with their infant should be aware of the following ways to minimise the risk of SUDI:

- Never sleep with infants on unsuitable surfaces such as a sofa, armchair or pillow
- Infants should not bed-share with a person impaired by alcohol or drugs
- Infants should be placed supine for sleep
- Infants should not be exposed to any second-hand smoke
- The bed should not be near any walls or furniture where the infant's head or body could get wedged between the bed and such objects
- The surface of the bed should be firm and not have any objects (eg doonas or pillows) which could cover an infant's head
- The infant should not be left alone on an adult bed
- The safest sleeping position to adopt when bed-sharing is a C-position around the infant. This is where the infant's head is positioned across from the adult's breast and the adult's legs and arm(s) curl around the infant.

Resources

Blair, P.S., Ball, H.L., McKenna, J.J., Feldman-Winter, L., Marinelli, K.A., Bartick M.C. and the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (2019). *Bedsharing and Breastfeeding: The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Protocol #6*, Revision 2019.

Brodribb, W. (ed) 2019, *Breastfeeding Management in Australia*. 5th ed. Australian Breastfeeding Association, Victoria.

Australian Breastfeeding Association (2019), *Bed-sharing and your baby: The facts*. Retrieved 16/1/20 from: <https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bfinfo/breastfeeding-and-co-sleeping>



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