



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

nyc.gov/health



HOW YOU CAN HELP REDUCE SIDS DEATHS

May 2004

Dear [*First Name, Last Name (of Hospital Administrator/Medical Provider/Nurse Administrator)*]:

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the leading cause of death among infants over the age of one month. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends placing infants to sleep on their back at all times to reduce the risk of SIDS, unless otherwise recommended by a doctor.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We support the AAP back-to-sleep recommendations, and encourage you and your staff to consider the following strategies for implementing the recommendations in your own hospital setting:

1. If your hospital does not consistently model the back-to-sleep position, we strongly encourage you and your staff to always place infants to sleep on their backs in all newborn nurseries, including intensive care settings, and to discuss the importance of back-to-sleep in reducing risk of SIDS with parents/caregivers.
2. If your hospital is currently practicing the supine position, we sincerely commend your efforts and encourage you to continue using the method — not only in newborn nurseries, but also in the NICU.
3. Encourage parents/caregivers to use the back-to-sleep position after discharge in all follow-up visits, so that use of the supine position is maintained, even several months after birth.
4. Recognize and acknowledge parents/caregivers for their value, importance and expertise in childcare. Provide positive reinforcement for what they are doing right and guidance on SIDS risk reduction methods that they are not practicing, especially back-to-sleep.
5. Please include grandmothers and other caregivers, whenever possible, during educational efforts regarding SIDS risk reduction, since some parents identify them as one of their most valuable sources of medical information.

WHAT WE KNOW

Since the initiation of the Back-to-Sleep Campaign, the national rates of SIDS have declined dramatically. New York City SIDS rates have also decreased over the past decade and are lower than the national SIDS rates. Although SIDS rates in New York City have declined, there still remains a significant disparity among certain racial and ethnic groups. From 1999 to 2002, SIDS death rate (per 10,000 live births) among Black non-Hispanics (5.4) was nearly twice the rate of Hispanics (2.9) and more than 10 times the rate for White, non-Hispanics (0.5). The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) 2003 Community Health Survey found that 36% of Black, non-Hispanics reported putting their infants to sleep on the stomach, compared with 11% of other respondents. Given these disparities, we are very concerned that the recommendation to put babies to sleep on their back is not being consistently practiced by parents and caregivers.

Recent focus groups conducted by the Bureau of Maternal, Infant and Reproductive Health (BMIRH), NYC DOHMH, found that the majority of mothers of African American or Black Caribbean descent received back-to-sleep education in the hospital, but most switched from supine sleeping to prone sleeping after one week – citing encouragement by their own mother, concerns about baby's discomfort, and fears of choking. African American/Black Caribbean parents and caregivers reported feeling disconnected from providers, often due to negative past experiences. Moreover, they often felt inappropriately singled out or implicitly blamed for SIDS – rather than being recognized as loving, caring parents/caregivers who want what is best for their children.

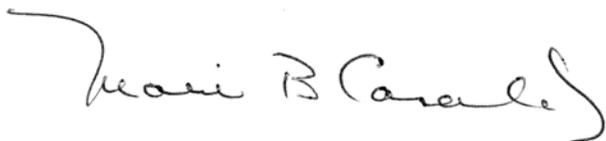
BACK-TO-SLEEP RECOMMENDATION & RESOURCES

Enclosed is the AAP recommendation on SIDS, infant sleep environment and sleep position. A SIDS provider education slide set is now available on the BMIRH website, www.nyc.gov/health/maternity, which you can download and modify as needed. If you would like to find out more about NYC DOHMH activities to reduce SIDS deaths, such as provider presentations, please contact Katrina Manzano at BMIRH, (212) 442-1756. We thank you for your support in this vital effort to promote back-to-sleep and reduce the risk of SIDS deaths for infants in New York City.

Sincerely,



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