

Adventist Healthcare: Health Tip of the Week

SIDS

Approximately 2,500 babies die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) per year in the United States.

The Definition of SIDS

SIDS is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age. The death remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation that includes a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene and review of the clinical history.

Reducing the Risk of SIDS

For Parents-to-be

- Take measures to reduce the risk of premature birth, a major risk factor for SIDS. Get medical care early in pregnancy (within the first three months) followed by regular check-ups and good nutrition.
- Do not smoke, or use cocaine or heroin.
- Prevent becoming pregnant during the teenage years. The SIDS rate is highest for babies born to teenage mothers.

For Parents

- Have the infant sleep on his/her back. The baby retains less heat and is less likely to have apnea (pauses in breathing). Also, the baby is less likely to re-breathe the air he/she has just exhaled which can raise the level of carbon dioxide. Belly-sleep has up to 12.9 times the risk of death than back-sleep.
- Do not over-clothe the infant while he/she sleeps.
- Avoid exposing the infant to tobacco smoke.
- Place the infant in a baby bed with a firm mattress. There should be nothing in the bed such as covering, pillows or toys.
- Avoid exposing the infant to people with respiratory infections. Clean anything that comes in contact with the baby. SIDS often occurs in association with relatively minor respiratory and gastrointestinal infections.
- The risk of SIDS exceeds the general population by as much as 5-10 times for infants weighing less than 3.5 pounds at birth and for infants who have had a life-threatening event.
- Breast-feed babies whenever possible. Breast milk decreases the occurrence of respiratory and gastrointestinal infections. Studies show breast-fed babies have a lower SIDS rate than formula-fed babies.
- The Immunization Safety Review Committee established by the Institute of Medicine confirms there is no reason to believe the seven vaccines routinely given to infants during their first year of life contribute to increased risk of SIDS.

Sources: American SIDS Institute, CDC, National Center for Health Statistics and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.