



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Sleep Safely and Soundly

Suffocation Deaths Associated with Use of Infant Sleep Positioners – United States, 1997-2011

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Bowen] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Dr. Anna Bowen, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Sleeping babies appear so peaceful and secure in their cribs. But if not positioned properly, they could be in danger. Suffocation is the leading cause of injury death among infants younger than one year old, and many of these deaths have been linked to unsafe sleep environments.

Gail Gantt is a scientific reviewer with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. She's joining us today by phone to discuss the safest environment for sleeping infants. Welcome to the show, Gail.

[Gail Gantt] Thank you. It's great to have this opportunity to talk about safe sleep environments for babies.

[Dr. Bowen] Gail, how many infants suffocate in their sleep each year?

[Gail Gantt] Unintentional suffocation accounts for about a thousand infant deaths annually.

[Dr. Bowen] How are babies suffocating?

[Gail Gantt] Suffocation has been associated with soft bedding, such as pillows or babies sleeping on a waterbed mattress. And suffocation has also been associated with bed sharing because of the concern of parents or caregivers rolling on top or against their infant while they're sleeping. And the other issue with suffocation is entrapment. Infants can become wedged between a mattress and a wall or a sleep positioner and the bed frame. And even an infant's head and neck can be caught between crib railings.

[Dr. Bowen] What's the safest sleeping position for infants?

[Gail Gantt] Babies should be placed on their backs for sleeping. It's the safest sleep position. It's like remembering your ABCs – place babies *alone*, on their *back*, in a bare *crib*. The crib should have a firm mattress and a fitted sheet.

[Dr. Bowen] Is it ever safe for babies to sleep in a bed with their parents?

[Gail Gantt] It's really never safe to sleep with your baby. Room sharing is recommended because it still allows parents to be close to their baby and it helps facilitate feeding and comforting and just monitoring of your infant.

[Dr. Bowen] Should parents or caregivers use pillows or cushions to ensure a baby doesn't roll around while sleeping?

[Gail Gantt] Things, such as pillows, comforters, cushions, should not be used. They can interfere with a baby's ability to breathe if these items cover their face. Once a baby can roll from their back to stomach and stomach to back, they should be allowed to remain in the sleep position that they assume.

[Dr. Bowen] Gail, where can listeners get more information about sleep safety for infants?

[Gail Gantt] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov/sids, s-i-d-s.

[Dr. Bowen] Thanks, Gail. I've been talking today with FDA's Gail Gantt about the safest sleeping environment for infants.

Remember the ABCs. Your baby is safest *alone*, on his *back*, in a bare *crib*.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Anna Bowen for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.