



Overview of Infant Safe Sleep Cards



Teachings from the precious babies who left us too soon: What we can do to prevent sleep-related infant death?

We all know that babies are precious little beings, this is so in every culture, including First Nations culture. We believe babies are sacred gifts from the Creator. We also know that the life cycle of birth, infancy, childhood, adolescence, "Elderhood" and death, include different teachings at each stage of our lives.

It seems only natural to look for teachings from the stage of infancy. When we do this, we see that one thing we have learned from the babies who have left us too early as a result of Sleep-related Infant Deaths is there are things we can do to prevent other babies from making an untimely departure to the Spirit World.

Please share these teachings we have learned from babies who have left us too soon. Share with everyone to protect our future babies as sacred gifts of life. It is all of our responsibility as moms, aunts, dads, uncles, and grandparents to protect our little ones.

As for those babies who were only with us for a short time, we can be grateful to them for what we have learned to protect the next generation of babies, and honour their memories in this way. When a baby (or any person at any stage of life) is called to the Spirit World, the family, community and Nation can come together in ceremony to support the grieving loved ones spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically.

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards





These are the teachings of the babies who were taken too soon:

ENVIRONMENT

- Use cribs/cradles/bassinets specifically designed for infants – no adult bed or couch sharing (ensure they meet the Canadian Standards for Crib & Cradle Regulations and make sure the sleeping area is free of toys, pillows, heavy blankets and bumper pads).
- Use firm mattress free of toys, soft pillows and loose blankets.
- Ensure baby is not overheated in a warm house and not over dressed.
- When visiting take extra care to plan ahead so you have a safe sleep place for baby to sleep.
- Smoke free environment – during pregnancy and after birth.
- Room Sharing – same room for first 6 months on separate sleep surface.

POSITION

- Back to sleep at nap time and bedtime.

PROTECTIVE FACTOR

- Stopping smoking (before pregnancy is best).
- Breast feeding six months or more.

RESOURCES

For more information about preventing Sleep-related Infant Deaths see:

- The Safe Sleep Environment Guideline for Infants 0-12 Months of Age from Perinatal Services BC.
- Perinatal Services BC and the Ministry of Health Developed new Safer Sleep Resources:
 1. <http://www.perinatalervicesbc.ca/health-professionals/professional-resources/health-promo/safer-sleep>
 2. Safer Sleep publication:
<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/year/2017/safer-sleep-for-my-baby.pdf>

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



SAFE

1A.





WHAT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

SAFE

Room Sharing

You can help keep your baby safe by placing him/her in the same room as you on a separate firm surface free of hazards, like a crib or bassinet for the first 6 months. This is called 'room sharing' and reduces the risk of Sleep-related Infant Deaths.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Keeping your baby close to you, but on a separate safe sleep surface, makes it easier to breastfeed, care for, and bond with your baby.
- Babies who sleep in the same room as an adult for the first 6 months have a 50% reduced risk of sleep-related infant deaths.
- You can also put the crib or other safe sleep surface next to a couch if you are away from home.
- Cribs and cradles should not be painted with lead paint or have decorative cut-outs or corner posts higher than 3 centimetres tall. Check on the wear and tear of all parts of the sleep surfaces. Spacing should not be wider than 6 centimetres between bars.

UNSAFE

1B.



STAGED PHOTOGRAPH BY NICOLE JIM



WHAT UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

UNSAFE **Bed-Sharing**

Bedsharing is when others are sharing the same bed with baby. Even though sharing a bed with your baby may seem natural to breastfeed, sleep, or cuddle; it is always best if you put your baby to sleep on a separate, firm, safe sleep surface to keep your baby safe. We know there are many factors that put baby at risk such as having pillows, soft mattress, other adults, taking medication that may make you drowsy, having drank some alcohol, etc. Each time Bedsharing occurs, it is a little different from the time before.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- If you are tired, have your baby sleep on a separate safe sleep surface or have someone else take your baby while you rest.
- Bedsharing puts baby at risk for suffocation:
 - Adult mattresses are softer and baby may roll over which may block his/her airway.
 - If you or your partner drank alcohol or took any drugs or medications that make you sleepy, there is a risk of rolling over onto your baby causing your baby to suffocate.
 - Pillows are too soft for baby and could cause suffocation.
 - Quilts and duvets are too large and baby may not be able to move it from their face.
 - If your baby was born premature (too early) this too puts baby at risk when Bedsharing.

It takes a community to raise a child – ask for help from family, friends and adopted family so that you can rest without any worry.

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



UNSAFE

1C.





WHAT UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

UNSAFE

Entrapment of baby between sleep surfaces

This card illustrates how Baby can get wedged between the bed or head of the bed, wall, or end tables. Take care to place Baby in a safe and contained surface. Regular cribs and bassinets (that meet Canadian safety standards) are the first choice for your baby. If an enclosed space for your baby is not available the baby box, like the drawer or laundry hamper, is a good back up and prevents the baby from sleeping in an unsafe place.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Use cribs/cradles/bassinets specifically designed for infants – no adult bed or couch sharing (ensure they meet the Canadian Standards for Crib & Cradle Regulations and make sure the sleeping area is free of toys, pillows, heavy blankets and bumper pads).
 - The bottom of these sleep surfaces only needs a little covering. Use a light blanket wrapped around a sturdy piece of cardboard. Tape it to the bottom of the cardboard so the blanket will not bunch up. It is important to ensure the bottom is firm, flat and free of clutter.

SAFE

2.





WHAT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

SAFE

Breastfeeding-Baby's First Traditional Food

Mom has many protective ways being with baby in this picture. Mom is breastfeeding her baby, which helps protect against sleep-related infant deaths. Breastfeeding is the first traditional food which brings the strength of our ancestors in the breast milk. Mom placed the crib next to her bed so they can sleep in the same room with each other, on a separate firm sleep surface. This is called 'room sharing' and helps reduce the risk of sleep-related infant deaths.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Babies who are breastfed have a lower risk of dying of sleep-related infant death.
- Breastfeeding for at least the first six months is very important and helps protect babies from illness.
- Continued breastfeeding to the age of two years or more is encouraged.
- Breast milk is good for babies and also helps moms because it is free and convenient.
- It is also good for a mother's health to breastfeed, and lowers a mother's risk of some cancers and Diabetes later in life.
- Moms who breastfeed may also lose weight easier after birth.
- Breast-feeding also lowers babies' risk of developing diabetes later in life³.
- Always have someone in the room with you if you are tired or taking medication that makes you sleepy in case you fall asleep - they can move baby to their safe sleep space.

If you have problems with breastfeeding, get help from a public health nurse, lactation consultant, doula, community health nurse and/or maternal and child health worker.

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SAFE

3.





WHAT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

SAFE

Alternative Safe Sleep Practices

In this picture the mother is visiting relatives or friends and sleeping on a couch. She is keeping her baby with her in the room to sleep (room sharing) but using an alternative sleep surface for the baby. This helps reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death.

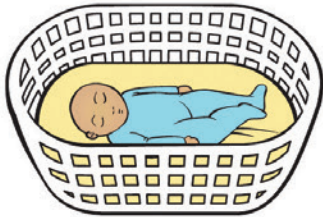
DISCUSSION POINTS

- Mom has placed her baby in a sturdy laundry basket that has a firm flat bottom. This is a safe alternative sleep surface for a baby when a crib, cradleboard, or bassinet is not available.
- Mom also made sure baby's sleeping area is clear of heavy or loose blankets, pillows, toys, sheepskins, or bumper pads. These are dangerous because they could cover baby's nose and mouth making it difficult to breathe. Mom has placed laundry basket next to couch so her baby can sleep in the same room as her on a separate sleep surface: called Room Sharing.
- It is recommended babies sleep in a crib, cradle, or bassinet that meets Canadian Safety regulations. If in good condition any of the alternatives shown in these pictures (see card 3B for additional pictures) can provide a safe sleep surface.
- The bottom of these sleep surfaces only needs a little covering. Use a light blanket wrapped around a sturdy piece of cardboard. Tape it to the bottom of the cardboard so the blanket will not bunch up. It is important to ensure the bottom is firm, flat and free of clutter hazards.

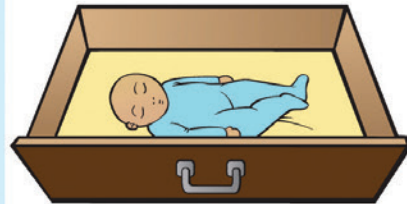


SAFE

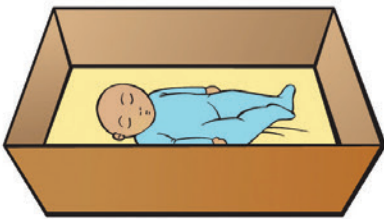
3B.



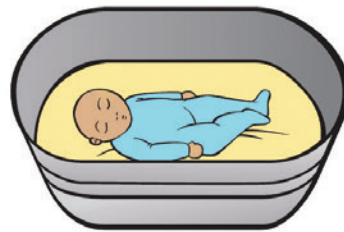
Basket



Drawer



Box or Carton



Washtub



SAFE

Alternative safe sleep practices

The pictures on the front of this card are safe alternative sleep surfaces.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- The bottom of these sleep surfaces only needs a little covering. Use a light blanket wrapped around a sturdy piece of cardboard. Tape it to the bottom of the cardboard so the blanket will not bunch up. It is important to ensure the bottom is firm, flat and free of clutter.
- The Baby Box Program: (you may have heard about it or will be hearing about it).
 - There is a baby bed program in Finland that has been around for over 80 years. Finland also has one of the lowest rates of baby deaths in the world. Part of their program is providing parents with a bed for the baby.
 - This bed is a simple cardboard box and is used for the first few months after birth.
 - Other countries in the world, including Canada have either started using this system or are looking into offering a similar program.
 - BC is presently looking into it and Vancouver Island Health Authority already has a pilot project started. Some individual communities have also started to use them.
 - Ask your health care provider if your community is using the baby boxes.
 - Regular cribs and bassinets (that meet Canadian safety standards) are the first choice for your baby. If an enclosed space for your baby is not available the baby box, like the drawer or laundry hamper, is a good back up and prevents the baby from sleeping in an unsafe place.
 - **Some people may have less positive feelings about the use of a box as they feel it too closely represents a coffin for a baby. These are real and valid feelings and beliefs and need to be respected. The box is an option for someone who is comfortable with the idea. It is your choice.**

To make sure these alternative bed surfaces are safe:

- The cardboard needs to be sturdy, dry, flat and in good shape.
- Drawer, laundry hamper or a bed box needs to be placed in a safe place like the floor. (not placed on tables, counters or a bed).
- Only used when baby is an infant and not able to sit up, pull self-up, crawl.

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UNSAFE

4.





WHAT UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

UNSAFE

Smoke: Baby's Healthy Safe Environment

Baby is being exposed to second hand smoke (the smoke that's exhaled and from the end of the cigarette) and third hand smoke (the chemical residue from cigarette smoke left on clothes, carpet, furniture dust), which increases the risk of unsafe sleep infant deaths.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- To protect baby avoid cigarette smoke when you are pregnant and after birth. Make sure your baby is not around cigarette smoke in the home or community. If you are pregnant and smoke or someone in your family smokes, now is the time to stop. Cigarettes contain many chemicals that can harm you and your baby's health.
- Talk with family, friends and community about not smoking in the house or anywhere near your baby. Cigarette smoke increases the risk of illness.
- Second hand smoke is more harmful for babies than adults, because they breathe faster and are still growing and developing.
- Third-hand smoke is harmful to baby because chemical residue from cigarette smoke also gets on clothes, furniture and carpeting. Babies can be exposed to third hand smoke left behind on clothing after a person has smoked. The residue from the smoke is brought into the house on the person's clothing.
- Even if people only smoke outside the house, like on the porch, babies still get cigarette chemicals in their bodies – at levels 8 times higher than babies of non-smoking parents.
- No matter how far along you are in your pregnancy, it is not too late to quit or even decrease the amount you smoke.
- You can continue breast-feeding your baby, even if you smoke cigarettes.

To help you quit or reduce the amount you smoke: see your health provider, join a stop-smoking program, contact QuitNow by phone (1-877-455-2233) or online (www.Quitnow.ca) for free, no pressure support, or call HealthLinkBC at 8-1-1.

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UNSAFE

5.





WHAT UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

UNSAFE

Temperature: Room and Baby's clothing

In this picture Baby is put to sleep wearing a toque. This can make the baby too warm while sleeping, especially if the room temperature is high or if they are near a heat source such as a wood-burning stove. Overheating increases the risk of sleep-related infant deaths.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- There is a danger if your baby is too warm while sleeping.
- If you are comfortable with the temperature in a room, your baby will be too.
- Don't overdress your baby, swaddle/bundle, or use hats inside the house.
- If room temperature is higher than 20 degrees there is a risk for sleep-related infant deaths if the baby is overdressed, swaddled/bundled, or close to heat such as wood burning stoves, heaters, or another person (including another child) in the same bed.
- Warm weather is usually not a problem indoors if your baby is not overdressed and can sweat.
- Your baby is more likely to get too hot if put to sleep on their tummy. Always place your baby on their back for sleep, for naps and at night.
- It is safe to use a sleeper blanket/sleep sack, or a light blanket tucked firmly under the bottom end of the mattress, with the baby's arms free when placed to sleep.

ARE THERE ANY SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES IN THIS PICTURE?

- Baby has been placed to sleep on their back.
- Baby is sleeping on a firm and flat surface – a crib.
- Baby's sleeping area is free of hazards like loose or heavy quilts or duvets, pillows, toys, sheepskins or bumper pads. These are dangerous; they can cover a baby's nose and mouth and make it difficult to breathe.

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



SAFE

6.





WHAT CULTURAL CEREMONIES ARE THERE IN YOUR COMMUNITY RELATED TO PREGNANCY AND BABIES?

Cultural Considerations

Babies are considered to be gifts from the Creator in many Indigenous communities. Participating in ceremonies shows love and respect for your baby.

- Do you know your family, Elders and community ceremonies related to pregnancy or child birth and baby like placenta, Belly Button, Naming, or spiritual cleaning ceremonies? If not, find someone in community or family who can share or support you with these blessings.
- Fanning with an eagle feather or cedar brushing are great ways to bless and cleanse your new family addition.

CULTURAL WAYS OF CARRYING BABIES:

Lots of parents carry their babies, both awake and sleeping, in soft slings, carriers, or cradleboards:

- When using a sling, check on your baby often. Some babies have suffocated when they were improperly put in a soft-bag-type sling or carrier (See Card 6B).
- Make sure your baby's face and airway are free and open to a good air supply. Avoid having baby:
 - In a chin-to-chest position that can accidentally block his or her airway (See Card 6B).
 - With their face pressed up against the parent's body.
- Ring-type slings carry babies upright and help protect the airway. Always ensure baby's head and neck are supported, especially if the baby was born premature (too early).
- Do not zip a jacket over top of the baby. This will cut down their air supply and not allow you to check on your baby.

If your baby was born premature, or with a low birth weight, is congested and having breathing troubles such as a cold, or has medical problems, talk to your health care provider before using a sling or soft carrier.

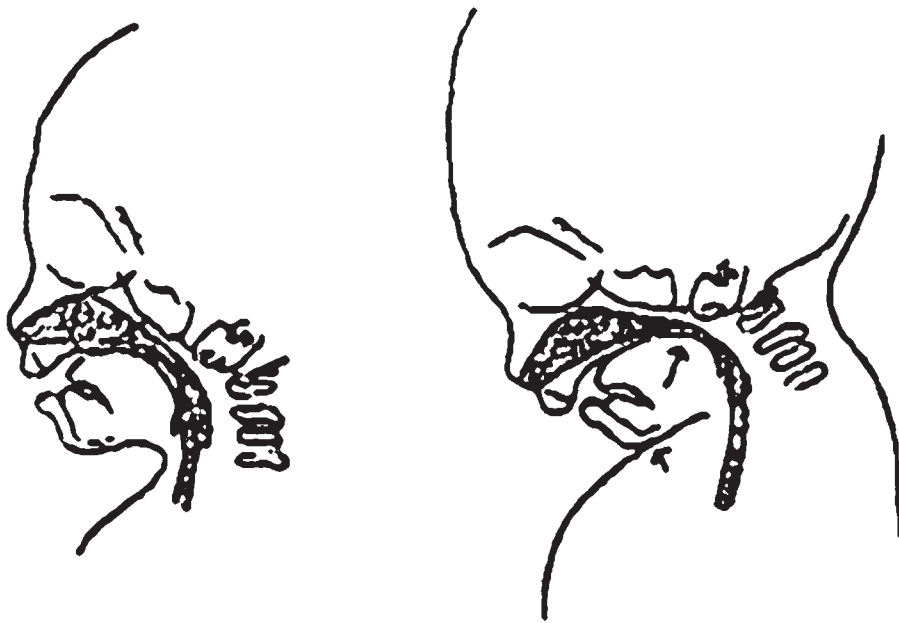
Also see www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



UNSAFE

6B.



Open airway (left) and airway 'breathing tube' narrowed with chin-to-chest (right).



DOLL



WHAT UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

UNSAFE

Soft Slings and Carriers

Lots of parents carry their babies, both awake and asleep, in soft slings or carriers. Some parents create a sling out of a large scarf. The type and amount of support the sling gives the baby depends on the type of sling used. Check your baby frequently if they are in a sling or carrier.

DISCUSSION POINTS

Some babies have suffocated when they were improperly positioned in a soft, bag-type sling or carrier. It is important parents make sure their baby's face and airway are free and open to a good air supply. Parents should avoid having baby:

- In a chin-to-chest position that can accidentally block his or her airway.
- With his or her face pressed up against the parent's body.

Ring type slings carry babies upright and help protect the airway. Parents should always ensure their baby's head and neck are supported, especially if the baby was born premature (too early).



CHOOSE?

7.





WHERE IS THE SAFEST PLACE FOR BABY TO SLEEP?

What are ways parents can keep baby safe when visiting relatives?

This family has just arrived at their uncle's house for a visit after a long drive. Their baby is still asleep in the car seat. They have to decide the safest place for the baby to sleep. The uncle does not have a crib. **Can you help them decide?** It is important for family members to learn safe sleep practices too. Car seats, baby swings, strollers and other carriers are not made for safe sleep. They are not covered by safety regulations for safe sleep that cribs are.

DISCUSSION POINTS

CAR SEAT - UNSAFE

- Car seats are made for keeping babies safe during car rides.
- Car seats have harnesses or straps and are sloped, which carry some risks for safe sleeping. Babies heads can fall forward which can lead to their airway being blocked (See pictures on Card 6B). Also, babies can move their body position and the harness or strap can press across their neck.
- Check on baby during car rides, take breaks to check on and re-position baby. When you arrive at your destination make sure to take baby out of the car seat and place him or her on a safe sleep surface (See Card 3B).
- It is also safer to have someone sit in the back seat to observe the baby.
- Remember, safe sleeping surfaces for babies must be firm, flat, and free of hazards.
- Now that the parents have arrived at their uncle's house, take baby out of the car seat and place baby on a safe sleeping surface (See Card 3B).
- When not in the car, traditional cradleboards, moss bag carriers, and cedar baskets can be used if available.

COUCH - UNSAFE

- If you plan to sleep on the couch, keep in mind the couch is not a safe place for the baby to sleep. The cushions are too soft and the baby's face may sink into the cushions or become trapped between the cushions. Even babies who do not roll over yet can slide in between the cushions (See Card 1C).

LAUNDRY BASKET - SAFE

- The empty laundry basket is a safe place for the baby to sleep if it has a firm, flat bottom such as a pad or a thin blanket that will not bunch up. For example, the parents can wrap a light blanket around a sturdy piece of cardboard and use strong tape on the bottom to secure the blanket. That is all the covering that is needed for a firm sleep surface.

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SAFE

8.





WHAT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

SAFE

Cradleboards

For generations, in many Indigenous communities, cradleboards or papoose boards were the traditional carriers and surfaces to keep babies safe when sleeping. Although specific designs of cradleboards are different, they are handmade, framed, flat baskets where the baby is placed on his or her back.

IF USING A CRADLEBOARD:

- Do not swaddle or fasten your baby tightly, baby needs to breathe easily and should not be overheated.
- A light blanket is all that's needed.
- The healthiest position is when baby's legs are not held tightly and straight, but when flexed at the hip with legs apart (naturally) which promotes natural hip development. It is important not to keep baby's hips held tightly together as being swaddled for long periods of time to prevent hip dysplasia or dislocation (hipdysplasia.org).
- Just like a car seat – baby should not be in the cradleboard for long periods.
- Always place the cradleboard flat on the floor, away from heaters or anything that could fall on baby.
- To keep baby safe in the cradleboard do not lean cradleboard against wall or anything else.

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



SAFE

The Period of Purple Crying®

9.

PURPLE crying stands for:

P

PEAK OF CRYING

Crying might increase each week, peak at 2 months, and be gone by 3-5 months.

U

UNEXPECTED

Crying comes and goes, and you don't know why.

R

RESISTS SOOTHING

No matter what you try, your baby still cries.

P

PAIN-LIKE FACE

Your baby seems to be in pain, even when he's not.

L

LONG LASTING

Up to 5 hours a day or more!

E

EVENING

Late afternoon and evening are peak crying times.



WHAT SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES DO YOU SEE IN THIS PICTURE?

The Period of Purple Crying®

Babies cry at some points in their life more than at any time. Some people call this colic. You can think of this time as a normal developmental period. There is nothing wrong with either your baby or with you as a parent. This time starts any time after 2 weeks of age and lasts until the baby is 3 or 4 months old. Every baby goes through it, but some babies just cry more than others.

Never get so angry or frustrated that you shake your baby. Shaking can cause serious and sometimes fatal damage to babies because they cannot control their heads and necks.

Talk to your health care provider if you need additional help or support.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Babies sometimes cry more than usual. Crying often comes in later afternoon or evening. It could last for hours.
- Babies who have fussy periods often sleep less.
- In the meantime you may feel frustrated, exhausted, overwhelmed, angry and defeated.
- When a baby is fussing often, even the best parent may need help. That is normal.
- If you are alone with your baby and feeling frustrated, it is fine to put the baby in a safe environment. Walk away until you feel calm. It is OK to ask for help.
- Never shake your baby because shaking can bruise and damage the brain. This is called “Shaken Baby Syndrome”.
- Remember to think about safe sleep each time you put your baby down to sleep.

Reach out to family & friends for help so you can get some rest.

HONOURING OUR BABIES: Safe Sleep Cards



10A.





DO YOU THINK THIS IS A SAFE OR UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICE? WHY?

SLEEP POSITION NAPS, BED TIME AND TUMMY TIME

An important way to protect your baby from sleep-related infant death is to ALWAYS place your baby on his or her back to sleep for naps and every sleep. Your baby will be looking up to the Creator. Your baby is more likely to get too warm if sleeping on their tummy, especially if they have their head covered.

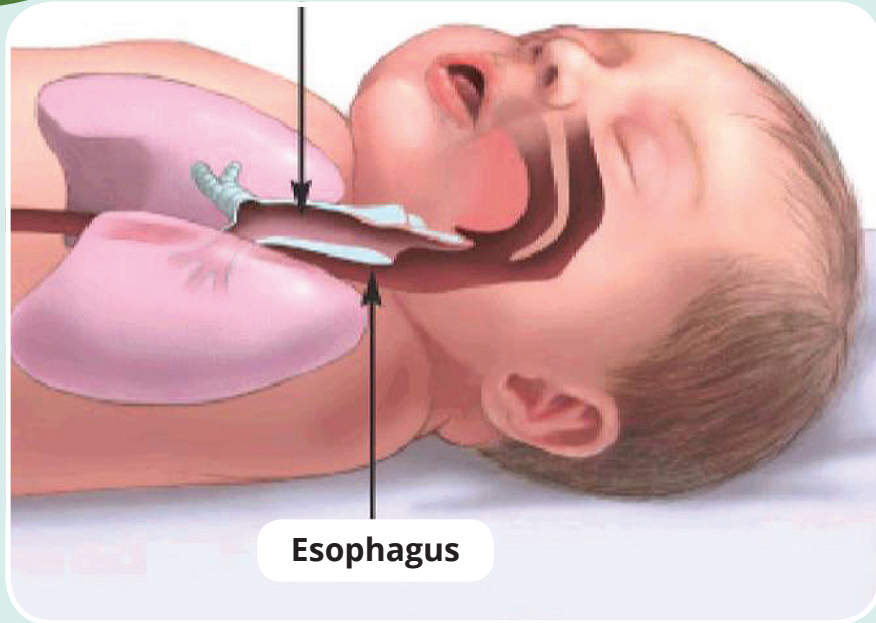
Back and Tummy sleep and choking:

Choking is a very common concern amongst parents and families. Share with families and parents: there is no evidence that babies choke when they sleep on their backs⁸. Babies might actually clear spit-up and vomit better when placed on their backs (See Card 10B).

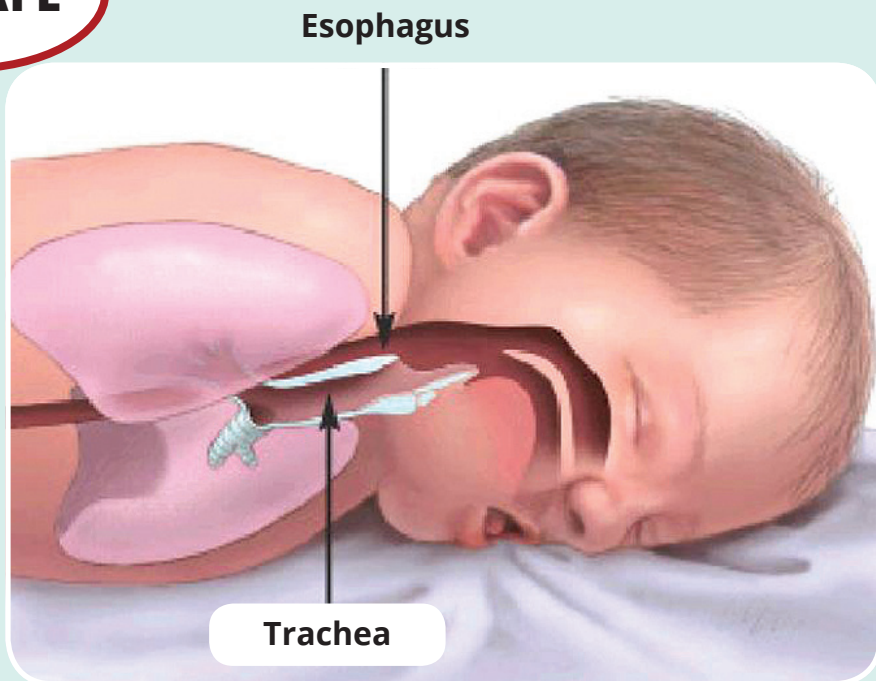


10B.

SAFE



UNSAFE





DO YOU THINK THIS IS A SAFE OR UNSAFE SLEEP PRACTICE? WHY?

Some families think their baby will choke on own spit sleeping on their back. The Creator created our bodies to be able to spit out while lying on our back. Thank the Creator!

Baby lying on his back.

The airway (trachea) is ABOVE the food tube (esophagus). Spit-up milk drains AWAY FROM airway due to gravity, making this position safer.

Baby lying on his tummy.

The airway (trachea) is BELOW the food tube (esophagus). Spit-up milk drains towards the airway because of gravity, making this position less safe.



SAFE

11.





IS TUMMY TIME SAFE? WHY IS TUMMY TIME IMPORTANT?

SAFE

Tummy Time

Tummy time is safe and good when baby is AWAKE and someone is WATCHING.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Allowing baby time on their tummy decreases the development of flat spots on their head (it can happen if baby is always on their back with head in the same position. When baby is on their back it is important to turn baby's head to different positions: right, left, centre).
- Tummy time is important for:
 - Developing healthy muscles.
 - Preparing baby to crawl.
 - Developing neck and back muscles.
 - Improving head control.
 - Supporting brain development.
- Placing baby on the tummy can sometimes help if they have gas or cramps.
- Babies should also have supervised "tummy time" when they are awake, for 10 to 15 minutes and at least 3 times a day. This can be started soon after birth but for less time. Start with 1-2 minutes and increase the time as the baby tolerates it. http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/playtime_with_your_baby
- Lay on the floor with your baby and have fun playing. Great time to just connect with your baby.
- If baby falls asleep, make sure to turn the baby onto the back or carry baby to crib and place on back.

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