

Child Safety: Infant Sleep Safety (Video 1)

Phyllis Agran: Hello. I'm Dr. Phyllis Agran. I'll be your host for this episode of "Keeping Them Safe."

Today's topic is infant sleep safety. An infant death is tragic in any setting, especially if it could've been prevented. We all want to prevent infant deaths. There are practices that you can put in place in your programs that are known to reduce the risk of sleep-related deaths. You, as an early care and education provider, must be knowledgeable in safe infant sleep practices. Regulations or requirements may vary greatly by state or locality, so it is important to follow your local or state regulations.

Caring for Our Children is a collection of best practice standards for early care and education programs. Within this resource, we find six simple messages on infant safe sleep in all settings. Place the infant on his back in a crib for all sleep times, including naps. Never put an infant to sleep on her stomach, unless you have a written waiver from the child's primary healthcare provider. Placing an infant on his back lowers the risk of infant death. To avoid any risks of strangulation, remember: only the infant in the crib. No soft objects, loose bedding, bumper pads, pillows, or toys. Only one thing belongs in the crib: the infant. Infants must sleep in a crib, a portable crib, or a play yard. To avoid suffocation, it is very important that infants don't share cribs and are not placed in couches or in car seats, highchairs, bean bag chairs, bouncy seats, or beds to sleep. Cribs need to meet your state safety standards, and the crib should have a tight fitting and firm mattress with a fitted sheet that is designed for that crib. In early care and education settings, swaddling is not necessary or recommended. When swaddled, if the blanket loosens, especially around the head, the baby can accidentally suffocate. The infant is safest in a one piece sleeper or outfit. If an infant sleeps with a pacifier at home and it is allowed in your program, it is important to remember not to offer an infant a pacifier unless you have written permission from the child's parent or guardian and a written policy about using pacifiers and how to inspect and clean them. Never clip a pacifier to an infant's clothing or tie it around the child's neck. This can result in suffocation or strangulation.

You are responsible for the infant at all times. A caregiver or teacher trained in safe sleep practices should always be present and actively supervising sleeping infants regularly. We all want to avoid infant death, and you play an important role in keeping infants safe while they sleep. You can find more recommendations for safe sleep practices in Caring for Our Children under the topic of safe sleep. It is important for you to develop clear policies, procedures, and practices that can be carried out by all staff within your program. Best practices include providing safe infant sleep training regularly and ensuring that all care providers are well trained. You may want to post clear safe sleep guidelines in your infant settings, including other indoor and outdoor environments. At the end of this episode, be sure to check out the additional resources and training materials on the video page.

Our time is almost up, but I have a couple of questions for you to consider. First, what policies and plans do you have in place to ensure staff are always using safe sleep practices? And second, how do you ensure that all staff who supervise infants are aware of your policies and practices?

Thank you for spending this time with me. We'll see you on another episode of Keeping Them Safe. Remember: The more you learn, the safer they are.