

Prevent Suffocation in Infants

Suffocation is the leading cause of injury death in children under the age of one. Here are some tips to keep your infant safe:

- The majority of childhood suffocation, choking and strangulation incidents occur in the home.
- Because most infant suffocation occurs in the sleeping environment, infants should sleep only in properly equipped cribs. They should never sleep on couches, chairs, regular beds or other soft surfaces.
- Children placed in adult beds are at increased risk for airway obstruction injury. In the last decade, more than 250 children under 2 years of age have died in adult beds as a result of entrapment in the bed structure. Furthermore, 209 children in this age group died in adult beds from smothering as a result of being overlain by another person.
- To avoid suffocation in the bed or crib, check that the mattress is tight against all four sides of the crib so that the child will not fall into a space and become trapped.
- Place an infant on his or her back on a firm, flat crib mattress in a crib with a JPMA label indicating that it meets national safety standards. The mattress should be covered with a tightly fitted sheet.
- Crib bars should be spaced in such a way that the baby can't slip its head through the bars and be strangled.
- Remove pillows, comforters, stuffed toys and other soft products from the crib. Sixty percent of infants suffocate in the sleeping environment as a result of pillows/ cushions blocking their airway while sleeping.
- Most babies don't need pillows. If you have to use a pillow, make sure it is thin and firm, not soft. Pillows with ventilation holes are available.
- Use a sleep sack or swaddle to keep the child warm, or tuck in a light blanket that goes no higher than the chest.
- Place a safety net over a bassinette or crib to stop cats from curling up on the baby's face.
- Never hang anything on or above a crib with string or ribbon longer than 7 inches.
- Never put a long cord like a necklace, ribbon or bib with ties on an infant.
- Remove bibs or any clothing with ribbons or cords before putting the baby to sleep. A loose bib may cause suffocation.
- Clip pacifiers to clothing with short leashes, not long cords.
- Take care that no dangling cords, like those of venetian blinds, are within the baby's reach.
- Never leave a baby to drink their bottle by themselves. They could vomit, inhale the milk and choke.
- Babies should not be given any food they cannot chew properly. Large chunks are easily breathed in.
- Choking most frequently happens to babies between the ages of five and eighteen months. Keep all small objects out of reach of the baby who is at this hand-to-mouth stage of development.
- Keep small toys or toys with small parts away from babies until they are old enough to handle them. Parts broken off of toys and games should be thrown away or be repaired. Also get rid of small pieces of crayon.



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