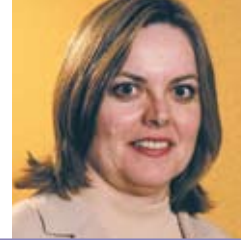


## Ask a Nurse with Isabel Clark

Call 943-LINK (5465)\*Mandarin Health Link 943-1554\*Cantonese Health Link 943-1556



**A.** Car seats and infant carriers should not be used instead of cribs for babies to sleep in. Car seats keep babies safe when they travel. Even then, the baby's face should not be covered.

There are other ways to help your baby sleep comfortably. Rock or feed your baby to bring her close to sleep, then try to put her down when she's sleepy but still awake. Do not use sleep devices such as wedges or rolled-up blankets or towels to try and make her more contented. Once she is old enough to roll over on her own, your baby can choose her own sleep position. You will also want to make sure your baby is not too warm – don't overdress her. She should be wearing about the same amount of clothing as you. Use only a light blanket and dress your baby in a warmer sleeper if the room is cool.

**Q.** We are thinking about buying a used crib? How do we make sure it is safe?

**A.** If you are planning to buy a used crib, make sure it was made after 1986. Cribs made before 1986 are dangerous and illegal to sell, import or advertise. Crib mattresses should be in good condition. Make sure the mattress fits tight against all four sides of the crib. Replace it if it is worn out or not firm. If the crib mattress is too soft or worn down in any area, your baby's head could get stuck in a gap or hollow and she could suffocate. Check Health Canada's crib safety standards before you buy a crib.

Isabel Clark is a telehealth nurse with Calgary Health Link.

# Rock-a-bye baby...

## Safe sleeping for baby's first year

**Q.** My wife and I are expecting our first baby in a couple of months and are taking prenatal classes. Our instructor said that babies should not have bumper pads in their cribs. My mom gave us bumper pads as a gift. Are they safe to use?

**A.** Soft materials, such as bumper pads, comforters, duvets, stuffed animals and pillows should not be in the crib or any other place where your baby will sleep. Babies move and bury their faces in the soft materials. This will stop them from getting enough air to breathe. If your baby's head or face is covered during sleep, she is at increased risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

**Q.** We also heard that our baby should not sleep in our bed with us. Is that true?

**A.** The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a crib close to your bed. Sleeping in an adult bed is very dangerous for babies. They can fall out of bed, or get trapped, smothered or overheated. Your baby is safest sleeping on her back, in her own crib (for the first year), on a firm, flat surface, in your room (for the first six months).

Even if you are with her, your baby should never be put to sleep in an adult bed, on a sofa, waterbed or recliner, on loose cushions, with other children

or pets. The risk of infant death increases when a baby shares a bed with another person, especially when that person is a smoker, very tired, obese, or has taken alcohol or drugs (street drugs, medications – prescription or over-the-counter). Babies should never be exposed to cigarette smoke as it increases the risk of SIDS.

**Q.** My wife is planning to breastfeed and we heard it will be easier for her if our baby sleeps with us. Is this true?

**A.** Some mothers find that sleeping with their baby helps with breastfeeding. But it is easy to fall asleep while breastfeeding, especially when lying down. Instead of sleeping with your baby, after feeding her, you or your wife can comfort and cuddle her before putting her back in her own crib to sleep.

When a baby shares a sleeping surface with another person it is called "bed-sharing." Having your baby's crib in the room where you sleep is called "room-sharing." Although some parents think sleeping with their baby decreases the risk of infant death, this does not seem to be true. "Bed-sharing" increases the risk of infant death. "Room-sharing" makes night-time feeding easier and can protect your baby from SIDS.

**Q.** My cousin's son would only sleep in his car seat when he was tiny. Is that O.K. to do?

### FYI

For more information on safe sleeping, please visit:

Calgary Health Region

[www.calgaryhealthregion.ca](http://www.calgaryhealthregion.ca) (click on Top Ten Health Topics, search: sleep)

Canadian Pediatric Society

[www.caringforkids.cps.ca/babies](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/babies)

Health Canada

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/crib-lits/index\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/crib-lits/index_e.html)

Calgary Health Region publications *From Here Through Maternity and Growing Miracles*, have useful information for expectant moms and parents. Call 943-LINK (5465) for more information.

To speak to a health professional, contact your family physician or speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling Calgary Health Link.

Calgary: 403-943-LINK(5465)

Or toll free: 1-866-408-LINK(5465)