

NICHD CE Program Matte Article

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Audience: Pediatric, obstetric and prenatal nurses

Nurses Play a Critical Role in SIDS Risk Reduction

Nurses who teach new parents how to care for their newborn babies witness one of the happiest times in people's lives. In some cases, it is also one of the scariest. The responsibility of a new life can be daunting.

Parents and caregivers of newborns look to pediatric, obstetric and prenatal nurses for guidance about how to properly care for their babies. Nurses make a difference every day, and they can extend their impact on families by modeling safe infant sleep techniques. That is why it is so important for nurses to be well informed about the leading cause of death for infants between the ages of one month and one year — Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome — or SIDS — is the term used to describe the sudden death of an infant younger than one year of age that remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the infant's and family's clinical histories.

Although there is no known way to prevent SIDS completely, there are ways to reduce the risk by modifying or controlling several factors. The single most effective action that parents and caregivers can take to lower their baby's risk for SIDS is to place their baby to sleep on his or her back for naps and at night.

In the past two decades, we have made enormous progress in decreasing the SIDS rate in the United States. SIDS rates have dropped by more than 50 percent since 1992, when health care providers and other health workers began educating parents and caregivers about risk-reduction techniques — like placing babies on their backs when they sleep, for naps and at night.

But there is still progress to be made. African American infants are twice as likely to die of SIDS as white infants are, and American Indian/Alaska Native infants face a SIDS rate that is three times higher than that of white infants. SIDS risk-reduction messages need to reach every parent, grandparent, and caregiver across the nation.

The *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) offers a free continuing education (CE) program for nurses about SIDS risk reduction. This program gives nurses the information and tools they need to educate parents and caregivers about SIDS in just a few minutes. The program explains SIDS risks as well as how to address questions and concerns parents and caregivers may have about risk-reduction behaviors.

Nurses who complete the self-directed CE program, which is approved by the Maryland Nurses Association*, will receive 1.1 credit hours. The program is available as a printed booklet and as an online module. Nurses can visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sidsnursesce/> to access the online

CE module or download the CE program, or call 1-800-505-CRIB (2742) to order a printed booklet.

* An accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation