Nearly 3,400 infants die suddenly and unexpectedly each year in the United States. Most of these deaths result from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other sleep-related causes of infant death. SIDS is the leading cause of death among infants between 1 month to 1 year of age.

SIDS is the term used to describe the unexplained death of a baby younger than 1 year of age that doesn’t have a known cause even after a complete 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 several factors.

The Safe to Sleep® campaign (formerly known as the Back to Sleep campaign) aims to educate parents, caregivers, and health care providers about ways to reduce to the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. The single most effective action that parents and caregivers can take to lower a baby’s risk for SIDS is to place the baby on his or her back to sleep for naps and at night. Other key recommendations include putting the baby in a separate sleep area in the same room, next to where parents sleep, and using a firm sleep surface, in a safety-approved crib, covered by a fitted sheet with no soft objects such as pillows, toys, crib bumpers, or loose bedding.

In the past two decades, significant progress has been made in reducing SIDS rates. Since 1994, SIDS rates have dropped by more than 50 percent in all populations. But there is still progress to be made. For example, although the SIDS rate for African Americans has declined by 50 percent since 1994, today’s African American infants are twice as likely as white infants to die of SIDS. Similarly, American Indian/Alaska Native infants today are three times as likely as white infants to die of SIDS, even though SIDS rates have also dropped significantly in this population during the last two decades.

Working together, we’ve made great progress in helping to reduce the risk of SIDS in many communities. Let’s continue to work together to help all infants grow and thrive. Please help us spread the word about safe infant sleep! The following resources are available on our website http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov.

For Parents/Caregivers:
- Brochures for general outreach, African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic communities
- Door hangers for general outreach, African American, and Hispanic communities
- A grandparents brochure on safe infant sleep (English and Spanish)
- A safe sleep environment one-pager (English and Spanish)

For Health Care Providers:
- A Continuing Education program on SIDS risk reduction for nurses and pharmacists
- A health care provider Q&A booklet

For General Education Training:
- A Safe Infant Sleep video
- An interactive online tool on safe infant sleep
- Healthy Native Babies Project materials for American Indian/Alaska Native communities

For more information on the Safe to Sleep® campaign, go to: http://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov

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