

Healthy Sleep Habits for Babies Reduce SIDS Risks

Join Atrium Health Navicent in observing National SIDS Awareness Month

MACON, Ga., Oct. 3, 2024 – Atrium Health Levine Children’s Beverly Knight Olson Children’s Hospital invites the community to observe National SIDS Awareness Month during October by learning about Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and how to reduce risk.

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a child less than 1 year old that remains unexplained after a complete investigation. These deaths often occur during sleep, or in the baby’s sleep area. SIDS is one type of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID), which also includes suffocation, entrapment, trauma and cardiac arrhythmias.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), about 3,400 babies in the United States die each year from SUID. Of these, more than 1 in 3 are attributable to SIDS. In 2020, there were about 1,389 deaths due to SIDS, about 1,062 deaths due to unknown causes and about 905 deaths due to accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed. In Georgia, for every 100,000 births, 127.9 infants die from sudden unexpected events including SIDS. That figure is well above the U.S. average of 92.9.

According to the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, SIDS is the leading cause of death among babies between 1 month and 1 year of age. More than 90% of SIDS deaths occur before a child reaches 6 months of age.

Ways to Reduce the Risk of SIDS

Although the cause of SIDS is unknown, there are ways to reduce your infant’s risk. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, all of the following decrease the risk of SIDS:

- Infants should be placed on their backs to sleep until they reach 1 year of age. Side sleeping is not advised.
- Babies should be placed on a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress covered by a fitted sheet. No other soft objects, such as blankets or stuffed animals, should be placed near the infant, to reduce risk of suffocation. It is recommended that infants sleep in their parents’ bedroom, on a separate sleep surface, at least for the first six months, but ideally for the first year.
- Do not cover your baby’s head or allow your baby to get too hot. Signs your baby may be getting too hot include sweating or their chest feeling hot.
- Feed your baby breastmilk. Babies who are breastfed or are fed expressed breastmilk are at lower risk for SIDS compared with babies who were never fed breastmilk.
- Mothers should not smoke during pregnancy or after a baby’s birth. Parents are encouraged to set strict rules about smoke-free homes and cars to eliminate second-hand smoke exposure to infants. In addition, mothers should not use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy.
- Pregnant women should follow their doctor’s guidelines for frequency of prenatal visits. Babies whose mothers obtained regular prenatal care are at a lower risk for SIDS.
- Recent evidence suggests that vaccines may protect against SIDS. Infants should regularly receive well-baby checkups and should get their shots on time as recommended by their doctor.

“Although SIDS rates continue to decline, the risk to babies in Georgia is higher than the national average,” said [Dr. Yameika Head](#), clinical practice director of Pediatrics at Atrium Health Navicent. “All babies must be placed on a separate safe sleeping surface on their backs. This is a must, not an option. Parents, daycare workers, babysitters and others who provide care for babies should familiarize themselves with safe sleep habits for babies, and the ways that these habits can reduce the risk for SIDS.”

Tips for Healthy Sleep Habits

Quality sleep is vital for your baby's daily routine. Not only do healthy sleep habits help give parents a much-needed break, but they also support a baby's rapid mental and physical development.

- **From birth to 2 months of age:** Babies need 16-18 hours of sleep a day. However, many babies sleep better during daytime hours than at night. The best way for parents to help a baby develop a good circadian rhythm (sleep-wake cycle) is to promote more daytime wakefulness and keep lights and stimulation low overnight.
- **At 3-4 months of age:** Parents should develop a bedtime routine that is consistent each evening and may include lullabies and rocking. At this age, parents are encouraged to put their baby to bed when drowsy but not fully asleep.
- **By 4 months of age:** During the early months of life, babies nap around the clock after brief periods of wakefulness. By this age, most babies are taking a predictable morning nap.
- **At 6-9 months of age:** Babies are generally taking two or three predictable naps each day.

To find a pediatrician or pediatric specialist, and to learn about our children's services, visit <https://childrenshospitalnh.org>.

About Atrium Health Navicent

Atrium Health Navicent is the leading provider of health care in central and south Georgia and is committed to its mission of elevating health and well-being through compassionate care. Atrium Health Navicent is part of [Advocate Health](#), which is headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, and is the third-largest nonprofit health system in the United States, created from the combination of Atrium Health and Advocate Aurora Health. Atrium Health Navicent provides high-quality, personalized care in 53 specialties at more than 50 facilities throughout the region. As part of the largest, integrated, nonprofit health system in the Southeast, it is also able to tap into some of the nation's leading medical experts and specialists with Atrium Health, allowing it to provide the best care close to home – including advanced innovations in virtual medicine and care. Throughout its 125-year history in the community, Atrium Health Navicent has remained dedicated to enhancing health and wellness for individuals throughout the region through nationally recognized quality care, community health initiatives and collaborative partnerships. It is also one of the leading teaching hospitals in the region, helping to ensure viability for rural health care for the next generation. For more information, please visit www.NavicentHealth.org.

About Advocate Health

[Advocate Health](#) is the third-largest nonprofit integrated health system in the United States – created from the combination of Advocate Aurora Health and [Atrium Health](#). Providing care under the names [Advocate Health Care](#) in Illinois, Atrium Health in the Carolinas, Georgia and Alabama, and [Aurora Health Care](#) in Wisconsin, Advocate Health is a national leader in clinical innovation, health outcomes, consumer experience and value-based care. Headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina, Advocate Health services nearly 6 million patients and is engaged in hundreds of clinical trials and research studies, with [Wake Forest University School of Medicine](#) serving as the academic core of the enterprise. It is nationally recognized for its expertise in cardiology, neurosciences, oncology, pediatrics and rehabilitation, as well as organ transplants, burn treatments and specialized musculoskeletal programs. Advocate Health employs 155,000 teammates across 69 hospitals and over 1,000 care locations and offers one of the nation's largest graduate medical education programs with over 2,000 residents and fellows across more than 200 programs. Committed to providing equitable care for all, Advocate Health provides more than \$6 billion in annual community benefits.

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