

Co-sleeping with your baby

This information sheet has been designed to provide you with information about how to keep your baby safe when sleeping. There is evidence that links co-sleeping with sudden infant death particularly when certain other factors are present and so it is important to be aware of safe sleeping guidelines.

It is also important to note that BRHS does not allow co-sleeping in our maternity ward. This is in line with the current SIDS recommendations as co-sleeping with babies under 4 months is considered high risk. Additionally, the hospital beds are narrow and create an increased risk of your baby falling out of the bed.

If more information is required please don't hesitate to ask your Midwife, Doctor or Maternal & Child Health Nurse.

What is co-sleeping?

Co-sleeping is when a mother, father or other person is asleep with a baby on the same surface such as a bed or a couch.

What is bed sharing?

Bed sharing is when a baby is brought to an adult bed for feeding /settling only with no intention of sleeping.

What is room sharing?

Room sharing is when a baby sleeps in its own cot next to the parents' bed. This practice is recommended for the first 6 - 12 months of life.

We welcome feedback at:

Bairnsdale Regional Health Service PO Box 474 Bairnsdale VIC 3875
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The information in this brochure is intended as a guide to one of the services provided by BRHS and is correct at the time of publishing This brochure was based on information from King Edward Memorial Hospital "Formula Feeding" (2014).

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Bairnsdale Regional Health Service is located on the traditional land of the Gunaikurnai people.

When is it considered high risk to co-sleep with my baby?

- When your baby is under four months of age.
- When your baby is **preterm** or **very small**.
- Where the baby can be trapped between the wall and bed, can fall out of bed, or could be rolled on.



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How can I make co-sleeping safer?

Babies **must never** be put to sleep on a sofa or couch. There is a very high risk of infant death when a baby shares a sofa or couch with an adult during sleep.

After four months, if you choose to share a bed with your baby it is important to ensure that:

- The mattress is firm and flat.
 - The bedding or covers do not overheat your baby.
 - The bedding cannot cover your baby's face.
 - Use only lightweight blankets and keep pillows, doonas and any other soft items well away from the baby.
 - Ensure there is nothing soft under the baby e.g. a sheepskin rug.
 - Your baby is dressed appropriately such as in a safe baby sleeping bag fitted with neck and arm holes so baby can lie outside the bed covers.
 - Your baby is not left alone on the bed or put to sleep on a sofa.
 - After feeding the baby is lying on their back (not their side or tummy).
 - Other children or pets NEVER sleep near your baby.
 - Your baby is not too close to the edge of the bed where they can roll off. Do not place a pillow at the side of the baby to prevent rolling off. A safer alternative is to put the mattress on the floor.
- The baby is placed at the side of one parent (not in-between two parents), as this decreases the likelihood of the baby becoming covered or slipping underneath adult bedding.
 - Sleeping on a low mattress may be safer than a high bed.
 - Pushing the bed up against the wall can be hazardous as the baby can become trapped between the bed and the wall.

Any benefits of co-sleeping must be carefully considered with the risk factors stated above. When your baby is settled it is recommended that you return your baby to their cot.

What are the benefits of room sharing?

SIDS and Kids recommend that your baby's cot is placed in the same room as you (the parents) for the first 6 to 12 months of life.

This can help you to:

- Respond to your baby's needs more quickly.
- Maintain successful breastfeeding.
- Settle and comfort your baby more conveniently and easily than if sleeping in a separate room.
- Communicate and bond with your baby.
- Reduce the risk of your baby dying of SIDS or fatal sleep accidents.

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How can I keep my baby safe cot sleeping?

Items such as soft toys, cot bumpers, sleep positioners or sheepskins can create a suffocation risk so should never be put in the cot.

The cot mattress should be firm, well-fitting and flat.

The cot should be made up so your baby's feet are near the bottom of the cot and the covers only come up to your baby's shoulders.

For more information on safe sleeping you may like to visit:

Red Nose - Saving Little Lives: Safe sleeping practices for newborns.

<http://www.sidsandkids.org/safe-sleeping/>

Women's and Children's Health Network: Safe sleep for babies and toddlers.

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=114&np=305&id=1697>

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