

# Infant Sleep Safety: a Guide for Grandparents

By Patti-Jo Burtnett,  
Lorain County Children Services

**R**arely does a week go by without spotting a few folks wearing t-shirts that say **“Grandma is My Name and Spoiling is My Game!”** or **“World’s Best Grandpa!”** Grandparents are a proud group of folks – just ask those t-shirt wearers to see photos of their grandchildren – and they have every right to be because, as another slogan says, **“When the going gets tough, we go to Grandma’s.”**

There is another very important slogan that all grandparents need to know as they head down that path toward being the **“World’s Coolest Grandpa.”**

## **“BACK TO SLEEP”**

When you are babysitting your infant grandchild, it is important for you to remember to place her on her back at nap times and sleep times. Remembering this simple slogan will help reduce the risk of sleep-related problems for your bundle of joy. In fact, putting your grandbaby on her back to sleep is one of the easiest ways to lower your baby's risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

Health care providers used to think that babies should sleep on their stomachs, but research now shows that babies are less likely to die of SIDS when they sleep on their backs. Placing your baby on his or her back to sleep is the number one way to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Sleep surface matters as well. Babies who sleep on or under soft bedding are more likely to die of SIDS or asphyxiation. Additionally, babies should not sleep with an adult or another child either. Always place your baby on her back to sleep and always place your baby in her crib (or portable crib) for sleep times.

In October 2005, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a policy statement outlining recommendations for reducing the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related infant deaths. The Ohio Department of Health continues to urge parents and grandparents to follow these recommendations as the most effective way to reduce the risk of infant death:

- Place infants for sleep wholly on the back for every sleep, nap time and night time.
- Use a firm sleep surface. A firm crib mattress is the recommended surface.
- Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the crib.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy. Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Maintain a separate but proximate sleeping environment. The infant’s crib should be in the parents’ bedroom, close to the parents’ bed.
- Offer a pacifier at sleep time.
- Avoid overheating.
- Avoid commercial devices marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS. None have been proven safe or effective.
- Encourage “tummy time” when awake to avoid flat spots on the back of the head and to strengthen the upper torso and neck.
- Continue the Back to Sleep campaign for parents, grandparents and all other caregivers.

We all know that **“Grandmas Make the World a Better Place.”** And with these simple tips for sleep safety, you and your grandchild will enjoy many, many wonderful days and nights together. For more information, please contact your child’s pediatrician, your Health District or Health Department, your local public children services agency, or your own physician.

*Permission granted to reprint if used in its entirety and with attribution.*

Lorain County Children Services ● [www.ChildrenServices.org](http://www.ChildrenServices.org) ● 440-329-5340

