

NICHD CE Program Matte Article

Word Count: ~500 words

Audience: Pediatric, obstetric and prenatal nurses

Nurses Play a Critical Role in SIDS Risk Reduction

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 in people's lives every day, and they can extend their impact by modeling safe infant sleep strategies for families. It is important for nurses to be well informed about the leading cause of death for infants between the ages of 1 month and 1 year—Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)—and other sleep-related causes of infant death, such as accidental suffocation.

SIDS is the term used to describe the sudden death of an infant younger than 1 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, 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 addition, creating a safe infant sleep environment and other actions can help reduce the risk of other sleep-related causes of infant death.

In the past 2 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 strategies — like placing babies on their backs to sleep for all sleep times.

But there is still progress to be made. African American infants are more than two times as likely to die of SIDS as white infants, and American Indian/Alaska Native infants are nearly three times as likely to die of SIDS as white infants. The rates of other sleep-related causes of infant death also continue to increase. 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 and other sleep-related causes of infant death in just a few minutes. Nurses can not only learn about risks for SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death, but also how to address questions and concerns parents and caregivers may have about risk-reduction behaviors.

Nurses who complete the self-directed CE program will receive 1.1 contact hours. The program is available as a printed booklet and as an online module. To access the online CE module or download or

order the CE booklet, visit <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/pages/sidsnursesce.aspx>. Nurses can also call 1-800-505-CRIB (2742) to order a printed booklet.

* This continuing nursing education activity was approved by the Maryland Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.