

# Where might my baby sleep?



Use this leaflet to find the right night's sleep for you and your baby.



# Introduction

This leaflet has been developed to encourage pregnant women and their families to consider carefully where their baby might sleep. It aims to help pregnant women and their families make informed choices according to their personal and family circumstances, and to be aware that these may change from night to night.

## Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

This information can be made available in other formats and languages on request.

The Trust has a legal and ethical obligation to ensure that all its services and supporting information is accessible to all.

If you feel that information or a service discriminates against you on the grounds of your ethnic background, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age or religion, then we need to know about it.

Contact a member of the Baby Friendly Project Team:

Email: [comms@NWNWBabyFriendly.org.uk](mailto:comms@NWNWBabyFriendly.org.uk)

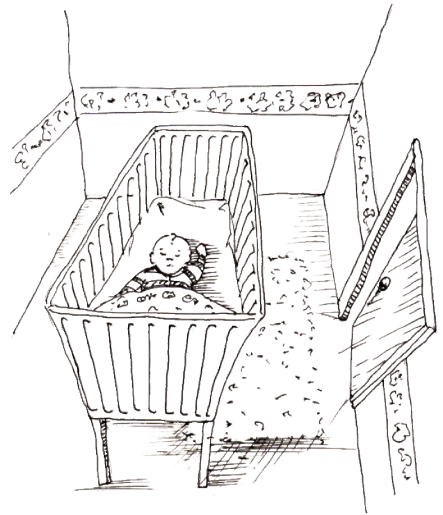
Twinkle ☆  
☆ Twinkle  
Little ☆  
Star



# Where might my baby sleep?



Some babies sleep in a room on their own.



## Why might I do that?

People sometimes put babies in their own room because they have made a nursery and think this is where the baby should sleep.

Other parents don't want to be disturbed in the night. Some parents want to encourage their babies to sleep alone, from a young age.

## What should I think about?

Babies sleeping in a separate room from their parents have a greater risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in the first 6 months.

If your baby is hungry or needs you, he has to cry loudly to let you know.

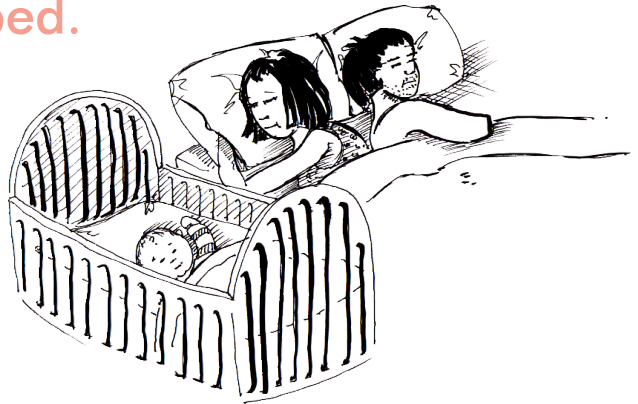
It is safer to have baby in the same room as you for the first 6 months.



# Where might my baby sleep?



Some babies sleep in a cot or crib beside their parents' bed.



## Why might I do that?

Sleeping in a parents' room reduces the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and makes feeding easier. You can hear when your baby wakes up and your baby knows you are not far away.

## What should I think about?

Baby should be on back, feet to foot of cot, no pillows or toys in the cot. The room should be a comfortable temperature - about 18°C.

Use sheets and lightweight blankets or a baby sleep bag, but not duvets, quilts, baby nests, wedges, bedding rolls or pillows.

Do not let anyone smoke around your baby.

Keep baby in your room until they are at least 6 months old.

# Where might my baby sleep?



Some babies sleep in bed with their parents for some or all of the night.



## Why might I do that?

Breastfeeding lying down in bed can be quick and easy. Breastfed babies feed frequently and having baby sleep next to you in bed can help with frequent feeds. Breastfeeding also reduces the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Sometimes, breastfeeding mums take baby into bed to feed and fall asleep without meaning to. As well as to feed, parents sometimes sleep with their babies under special circumstances, such as when they are unwell, teething, or have had an injection.

In the UK, approximately 50% of all babies under 3 months, and 75% of breastfed babies, will have shared a bed with their parent(s), whether intentionally or accidentally.

## What should I think about?

Breastfeeding mothers often find bed-sharing a very positive experience when done carefully, but you must decide whether or not you are able to do it as safely as possible.

**Complete the bed-sharing questions on pages 8 and 9 to see what you should consider before bed-sharing. Then, turn to page 10 for information on how to bed-share more safely.**

# Where might my baby sleep?



Parents and babies sometimes fall asleep together on sofas and in armchairs.



## Why might I do that?

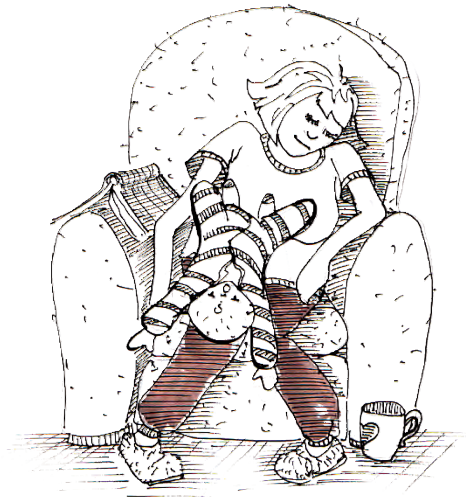
Taking baby out of the bedroom to feed or settle, fetch a bottle, or avoid disturbing a partner or other children could lead to you falling asleep in the living room with the baby in your arms or on your chest.

# Where might my baby sleep?

## What should I think about?

Sofas, armchairs and makeshift beds such as bean bags are dangerous places to sleep with babies who can easily get trapped, squashed or dropped. Sleeping with your baby on a sofa also puts them at an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

**NEVER**  
fall asleep on a  
sofa or armchair  
with a baby.



# Before bed-sharing ask yourself these questions. <sup>z</sup>z<sup>z</sup>Z

Do either you or your partner EVER smoke?



ANSWER YES

Have you or your partner recently drunk any alcohol?



ANSWER YES

Did you smoke in pregnancy?



ANSWER YES

Have you or your partner taken any medication or drugs that might make you sleep heavily?



ANSWER YES

Are you excessively tired? (e.g have had less than 4 hours sleep in the last 24 hours?)



ANSWER YES

Are you formula feeding your baby?



ANSWER YES

Was your baby small at birth?  
(Born before 37 weeks, or weighing less than 2½ kg or 5½ lb at birth)



ANSWER YES



If you answer 'Yes' to any of these questions then bed-sharing is NOT advisable.



# Remember, people sometimes bed-share accidentally as well as intentionally... circumstances also change...so complete this checklist and assess YOUR risk.



Smoking increases your baby's risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome whilst bed-sharing.



Alcohol increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and accidental death whilst bed-sharing.



Smoking during pregnancy increases your baby's risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome whilst bed-sharing



Taking drugs or medication which impair your consciousness increases the risk of accidental death whilst bed-sharing.



Excessive tiredness affects the way you sleep and increases the risk of accidental death.



If you formula-feed, you may not naturally adopt the protective 'C' position whilst bed-sharing. See page 11.



Some evidence suggests that small at birth babies may have an increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome when bed-sharing with no-smoking parents. There is a dramatically increased risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome for small at birth babies who bed-share with parents who smoke.



Instead, consider either using a 3-sided cot that attaches to your bed, or having baby in a cot near your bed.'



# The best solutions to your answers



If you answer 'No' to all these questions and you decide to bed-share, or if there is a chance that you may bed-share accidentally, you should make sure that the bed is as safe a place as possible for your baby.

- The mattress needs to be clean, firm and flat.
- Do not use waterbeds, electric blankets or bean bags.
- Make sure that your baby can't fall out of bed or get stuck between the mattress and the wall.
- The room must not be too hot (16–18°C is ideal).
- Your baby should not be overdressed – he should not wear any more clothes than you would wear in bed yourself.
- The covers must not overheat the baby or cover the baby's head.
- Your baby must not be left alone in or on the bed as even very young babies can wriggle into dangerous positions.
- Your partner should know if your baby is in the bed.
- It is not recommended that an older child also shares a bed with you and your baby, but if you choose to do this then you or your partner should sleep between the child and the baby
- Do not have pets or cuddly toys in the bed.

# Sleep Position



If you are bed-sharing it's important to make sure your baby's head does not go under the covers or the pillow.

Most breastfeeding mothers naturally sleep facing their baby with knees drawn up under baby's feet and arm above baby's head. This protects the baby from moving down under the covers or up under the pillow. Your baby should not be overdressed and covers must not overheat the baby or cover his head.



**If you have never breastfed and do not naturally sleep in this position with your baby, then the safest place for your baby to sleep is in a cot in your room.**

Your baby may lie on her back or side to breastfeed. When putting your baby down to sleep, always put her on her back, **NEVER** on her front or side.

## Where can I get more information?

### **Talk to your Midwife or Health Visitor.**

Read the NHS leaflet 'Reduce the risk of cot death' available at:

[www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_096299.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_096299.pdf)

Read the UNICEF UK Baby Friendly Initiative and Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths leaflet 'Sharing a bed with your baby - a guide for breastfeeding mothers' available at:

[www.babyfriendly.org.uk/pdfs/sharingbedleaflet.pdf](http://www.babyfriendly.org.uk/pdfs/sharingbedleaflet.pdf)

Read the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board leaflet 'Give me room to breathe' available at:

<http://www.giveroomtobreathe.co.uk/downloads.html>

This leaflet has been prepared for the Infant Feeding Information Team in consultation with the Parent-Infant Sleep Lab, Durham University.

Drawings by Sukie Woodhouse, Breastfeeding Network.

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