



Keeping baby safe in bed: the first 6 weeks

Every year too many New Zealand babies die suddenly during sleep. Many of these deaths can be prevented.

Transcript ▾

You can help to keep your baby safe in bed by:

- making sure that your baby is in their own bed for every sleep (and in the same room as you or the person looking after them at night)
- making sure that your baby is on their back for every sleep
- having a [smokefree](#) (/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/helpful-advice-during-first-year/have-smokefree-home-and-car) home and car
- [exclusively breastfeeding](#) (/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/first-year/helpful-advice-during-first-year/breastfeeding-perfect-you-and-your-baby) your baby to around 6 months of age and continuing to breastfeed them until 12 months of age
- [immunising](#) (/your-health/pregnancy-and-kids/services-and-support-you-and-your-child/immunise-your-child) your baby on time

Make every sleep a safe sleep

Sudden unexpected death is a risk to babies until they are about 12 months old, but most deaths can be prevented.

There are things that we can do to protect our babies. Although for some babies the cause of death is never found, most deaths happen when the babies are sleeping in an unsafe way.

Always follow these safe-sleep routines for your baby and your baby's bed.

Make sure that your baby is safe

To keep your baby safe while sleeping, make sure:

- they always sleep on their back to keep their airways clear
- they are in their own bassinet, cot or other baby bed (eg, pēpi-pod® or wahakura) – free from adults or children who might accidentally suffocate them
- they are put back in their own bed after feeding – don't fall asleep with them (to protect your back, feed your baby in a chair rather than in your bed)
- they have someone looking after them who is alert to their needs and free from alcohol or drugs
- they have clothing and bedding that keeps them at a comfortable temperature – one more layer of clothing than you would wear is enough; too many layers can make your baby hot and upset them
- they are in a room where the temperature is kept at 20°C.

You can check that your baby is warm but not too hot by feeling the back of their neck or their tummy (under the clothes). Baby should feel warm, but not hot or cold. Your baby will be comfortable when their hands and feet are a bit colder than their body.

Make sure that your baby's bed is safe

Baby's bed is safe when:

- it has a firm and flat mattress to keep your baby's airways open
- there are no gaps between the bed frame and the mattress that could trap or wedge your baby
- the gaps between the bars of baby's cot are between 50 mm and 95 mm – try to get one with the gaps closer to 50 mm if you can
- there is nothing in the bed that might cover your baby's face, lift their head or choke them – no pillows, toys, loose bedding, bumper pads or necklaces (including amber beads and 'teething' necklaces)
- baby has their feet close to the end of the bed so they can't burrow under the blankets
- baby is in the same room as you or the person looking after them at night for their first 6 months of life.

It is never safe to put your baby to sleep in an adult bed, on a couch or on a chair.

If you choose to sleep in bed with your baby, put them in their own baby bed beside you – for example, a pēpi-pod® or wahakura. This may help to reduce the risk of your baby suffocating while they are asleep.

Information about using a pēpi-pod® or wahakura is available online – see the [Whakawhetu](http://www.whakawhetu.co.nz/) (<http://www.whakawhetu.co.nz/>) and [Pēpi-Pod® Sleep Space Programme](http://www.changeforourchildren.co.nz/pepi_pod_programme) (http://www.changeforourchildren.co.nz/pepi_pod_programme) websites.

Car seats and capsules

Car seats or capsules protect your baby when travelling in the car. Don't use them as a cot or bassinet.

Car seats and capsules are not safe for your baby to sleep in when you are at home or at your destination.

If you don't have a baby bed

If you don't have a baby bed, talk to your midwife or nurse. If you are on a low income, you may be able to get a Special Needs Grant from Work and Income to buy a bed. See the [Work and Income website](http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/) (<http://www.workandincome.govt.nz/>) or call 0800 559 009.

Related websites

Keep your baby safe during sleep – HealthEd (Health Promotion Agency and Ministry of Health)

(<https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/keep-your-baby-safe-during-sleep>)

A pamphlet with key messages about making every sleep a safe sleep to prevent babies dying suddenly in their sleep.

PEPE: safe sleep videos – Northland District Health Board and Whakawhetu

(<http://www.northlanddhb.org.nz/AboutUs/SUDIpreventionhealtheducation.aspx>)

Four online videos showing the safe sleep PEPE messages – Place, Eliminate, Position, Encourage.

Safe sleep for baby – Tapuaki: Pacific pregnancy and parenting education (<http://www.tapuaki.org.nz/im-parent/safe-sleep-baby>)

About keeping baby safe while they are asleep.

Safe sleep checklist – Kidshealth (<http://www.kidshealth.org.nz/safe-sleep-checklist>)

A safe sleep checklist for parents.

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