



IABLE

Institute for the Advancement of Breastfeeding & Lactation Education

Bedsharing and Lactation

Our expectations around infant sleep often do not match the normal sleep patterns of newborns and infants. **Parenting is exhausting**, and if an infant or toddler isn't sleeping, neither is their parent. This can lead to parents feeling desperate to find ways to help their child to sleep. Ultimately, the best strategy for infant and toddler sleep is one that is **safe and functional** for your family. Please speak with a trusted physician or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about your infant's sleep.

Risk Reduction with Bedsharing

[The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) recommend not bedsharing. However, multiple studies have shown that a large percentage of parents will share a sleep space with their baby at some point – whether intentionally or by accident.

What we know:

- Unsafe bedsharing practices increase the risk of infant injury and/or death.
- **Breastfeeding has been shown to be protective against Sudden Infant Death (SIDS)**, when done safely.
- Mothers who sleep next to their breastfeeding infants tend to **breastfeed more frequently throughout the night and for a longer duration of time**.

What Can I Do to Reduce the Risks Associated with Bedsharing?

Here are the important NEVERs:

- **NEVER** fall asleep when holding a baby while in a chair, sofa, or recliner.
- **NEVER** share a bed with a baby if you smoke or vape or live in a home with someone who smokes or vapes.
- **NEVER** share a bed with a baby if you or anyone else in the bed have been using alcohol, marijuana, sleeping pills or other medications or substances that cause drowsiness.
- **NEVER** share a bed with a baby who is not directly breastfeeding.
- **NEVER** share a bed with a baby who is preterm or low birth weight. (Talk to your infant's physician or other provider if you or your baby has known medical problems, as some of these can make bedsharing riskier.)
- A baby should **NEVER** sleep on their tummy, even when bedsharing.
- **NEVER** leave a baby to sleep alone in a bed.
- **NEVER** share a bed with a baby who is swaddled (swaddling can cause overheating and limits a baby's ability to move if needed).

If you have decided to bedshare, here are some additional precautions to make bedsharing safer:

- The lactating parent and infant should be in a bed with a safe sleeping surface. A safe sleeping surface is one that:
 - Has a **firm mattress**
 - Has **no pillows or blankets** near baby
 - Has **no soft bedding**
 - Has **no stuffed animals**
 - Has **no other adults, older siblings, or pets** (newborns should only be in bed with the lactating parent and/or their partner and should be **next to the lactating parent** at the level of their breast)
 - Has **no risk of the infant falling** out of the bed or being caught between the bed and the wall or the bed and the headboard
- If you are not planning on bedsharing but find yourself in a moment of unplanned bedsharing necessity, consider **sleeping on a mat on the floor or carpeting** as a safer alternative than falling asleep with your baby on a couch or chair.

Are There Safe Alternatives to Bedsharing that Support Lactation?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants sleep in a crib or bassinet in the same room as you (“roomsharing”) for the first 6 months. This **keeps your baby nearby** while maintaining separate sleep surfaces for you both.

There are many sleep positioning and bedsharing devices on the market. Some are tested and approved, and some are not. You can go to the [SaferProducts.gov](https://www.saferproducts.gov) website to learn more about product safety concerns.

Resources:

- Blair PS, Ball HL, McKenna JJ et al Bedsharing and Breastfeeding: The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Protocol #6, Revision 2019 Breastfeeding Medicine 15(1) 2020. <https://www.bfmed.org/assets/DOCUMENTS/PROTOCOLS/Protocol%20%236%20-%20English%20Translation.pdf>.
- Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Bedsharing and Breastfeeding Handout: https://abm.memberclicks.net/assets/PatientHandouts/English_ABM%20Bedsharing_Breastfeeding_Handout_Protected.pdf (accessed February 27, 2026)
- Rachel Y. Moon, Rebecca F. Carlin, Ivan Hand, The Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and the Committee On Fetus And Newborn; Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment. Pediatrics July 2022; 150 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2022-057990>.
- La Leche League Safe Sleep Seven: <https://www.llli.org/the-safe-sleep-seven/> (accessed February 27, 2026)