



Recommended Infant Sleep Practices in Child Care

Prepared by the Health & Safety Specialists at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota

Place all infants (birth up to 12 months of age) completely flat on their backs for sleep in a crib or playpen.

- ALWAYS place infants on their back each time you lay them down for sleep. Once infants can roll from back to front and front to back, infants can be allowed to remain in the sleep position that they choose.
- Elevating the head of the crib/playpen or sleeping on any inclined surface is not recommended by the AAP.
- If a parent requests an alternative sleep position or place for sleep, it is required to obtain a written order from a health care provider stating the medical reason and the time frame to follow the order. It is recommended to obtain written parental permission. You can refuse care if you are uncomfortable following the order. It is recommended to consult an attorney to discuss the liability risk.

Infants must sleep in a crib or playpen.

- Bassinets are not allowed.
- If using a crib:
 - It must be compliant with federal safety standards put into effect June 28, 2011.
 - Regularly check for loose, missing, or broken parts, hardware, or slats.
 - Do not allow more than 2 fingers width between mattress and frame.
 - Mattress must be firm.
 - Mattress should be kept in the lowest position.
 - Make sure model has not been recalled. Visit www.cpsc.gov for updates.
- If using a playpen:
 - Make sure the model has not been recalled. Visit www.cpsc.gov for updates.
 - Read the manufacturer's instructions before assembly and use of playpen
 - Make sure there are no holes in the mesh
 - Frame should be sturdy and lock in place
 - It is required to only use the pad provided by the manufacturer
 - Pad should lay flat and touch all four corners of frame
 - Use the Velcro straps/snap straps provided by the manufacturer to secure the pad in place
 - Check pad frequently to make sure wood panels aren't broken or haven't shifted
 - Bassinet inserts, mobiles, and changing pads sold with the playpen are not allowed

Do not allow infants to sleep in restrictive infant equipment such as car seats, swings, Rock n Play sleepers, bouncers, etc.

- Downward bending of the neck and head compress the airway, thus decreasing the amount of air the infant can breathe in.
- Promptly remove infants if they fall asleep.
- Infants are not well protected from the other children's activity in these devices.
- When using restrictive equipment, safety straps should always be used properly along with close supervision to prevent strangulation.
- Restrictive infant equipment contributes to positional skull deformities in infants.

Do not attach anything to the crib/playpen.

- Mobiles, mirrors, or crib toys are not allowed.
- Hanging/attaching blankets or other items on the sides or over the top of the crib or playpen is not allowed.
- Bumper pads of any type are not allowed.

Place crib/playpen in a safe location.

- Away from stairs, blinds, outlets, heaters, etc.
- Keep everything out of reach (ex. cords, pictures, etc.) within 3 feet of crib/playpen.
- Do not hang anything heavy on the wall above or around the crib/playpen (ex. shelves)

Provide tummy time when infant is awake and supervised.

- This strengthens neck and shoulder muscles, encourages rolling over and crawling.

Remove pillows, Boppys, heavy/fluffy blankets, sheepskins, other soft items from the crib/playpen.

Only use properly fitting FITTED crib or playpen sheets to cover the mattress or pad.

- Do not use flat sheets, blankets, or fitted sheets that are the wrong size to cover mattress/pad.
- Mattress/pad must maintain shape when fitted sheet is used. If playpen pad cannot maintain shape, use it without a sheet.

Blankets are not recommended.

- If using a blanket, only one blanket is allowed, and it should be thin. Place the infant's feet at the foot of the crib/playpen and tuck the blanket in along the sides and foot of the mattress/pad. The blanket should not come up higher than the infant's chest. Arms should be above the blanket.
- Weighted blankets are not recommended by the AAP.
- A written order from the infant's health care provider is required to use more than one blanket or a weighted blanket.

Swaddling is not recommended.

- If parents request that their infant be swaddled, only one thin blanket should be used, and it should not come any higher than to the infant's shoulders; blanket needs to be loose enough for a hand to fit between the blanket and the infant's chest so the infant doesn't have trouble breathing; blanket should be kept loose around the infant's hips. The AAP recommends swaddling to be discontinued when an infant shows signs of attempting to roll.
- Signs of rolling: gaining more control over arms and legs; having more head control; moving body from side to side, etc.
- A written order from the infant's health care provider is required to swaddle after an infant shows signs of attempting to roll.

Sleep sacks are a safer option than blankets

- Sleeveless sleep sacks are recommended.
- Swaddle sleep sacks (with arm panels) can be used but should be discontinued once an infant shows signs of attempting to roll.
- Sleep sacks should fit properly – infant's head should not slip through neck hole and no excess material should cover or gather around the infant's face.
- Lightweight sleep sacks are recommended to prevent overheating.
- Weighted sleep sacks are not recommended by the AAP; a written order from a health care provider is required to use.
- Sleep sacks should not be used once an infant is no longer in a crib/playpen.

Make sure the infant's head and face is always uncovered.

Don't let the infant overheat during sleep.

- Infants should not be dressed in more than one extra layer than an adult.
- Signs of overheating: sweating, chest feels hot to touch, flushed cheeks, heat rash, breathing rapidly

Consider offering a pacifier (with parent's written permission) when placing an infant down for sleep.

- Once infant falls asleep and the pacifier falls out, it does not have to be reinserted. Always inspect pacifier for cracks/tears.
- Pacifiers should not be tied around an infant's neck or clipped to an infant's clothing.
- Pacifiers with stuffed item/blanket attached are not recommended for sleep.

Remove bibs, necklaces (including teething necklaces), hooded clothing, headbands, and hats before laying infant down for sleep.

Do not let babies sleep or play in a room where smoking is allowed at any time.

Keep infants in sight and hearing when sleeping. If this is not possible, it is required by licensing to use an infant monitor and conduct regular visual checks.

- Visual checks are recommended every 10-15 minutes.
- Visual checks consist of the following:
 - Readjust clothing/blanket if needed.
 - Make sure head/face is uncovered
 - Make sure infant is breathing (chest rising & falling)
 - Check color of infant's skin (blue/gray skin indicates not enough oxygen; red skin indicates infant is overheated/fever/rash).
- Lighting in the room needs to be bright enough to see the infant's skin color and breathing.
- Enclosures/covers/tents for cribs/playpens are not allowed.
- Music/sound machines should be placed at a low volume to ensure infants' noises can be heard.
- Video monitors do not replace visual checks.
- All monitors/cords must be kept at least 3 feet away from crib/playpen.
- Written orders from a health care provider are required to use a monitor that requires cord(s) to be attached to the infant or for a device placed in the crib/playpen.
- Stay on same level (preferably main) as crib/playpens to make visual checks more convenient and fire evacuation safer/faster.

Require parents to remove their infant from the car seat and outer clothing when they arrive.

Refuse to place infants in their car seats for departure unless you are transporting the infant.

Do not allow infants to share a crib, even if they are siblings or twins.

Know and practice CPR.

- Know what to do for an unresponsive infant.

Do not use positioning devices.

- A written order from the infant's healthcare provider is required to use them.

Encourage regular check-ups and immunizations.

Support breastfeeding.

Set a policy on infant sleep practices/procedures.

- Put your policy in writing and give a copy to parents. Make sure parents sign your contract upon enrollment.
- Inform all staff, including substitutes and volunteers, of your policy on the first day of employment/volunteering before they are allowed to care for infants.
- Licensing requires written parental permission to use one blanket or sleep sack (both cannot be used at the same time), a pacifier, and a security item for sleep. Post copy out of reach of infant near the infant's crib/playpen for providers/ staff to reference.

Sources:

CFOC, 4th Edition, 2019

ND Child Care Licensing Regulations

Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 20222 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment, AAP, 2022

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