

# BREASTFEEDING ANSWERS

## Breastfeeding and Sleep for New Parents

It is normal for your baby to feed during the night. Babies grow fast in the first weeks and months and have small stomachs. While it can be hard to be awake during the night, it can also be a nice, quiet time to be with your baby.

There are lots of ways that you and your baby can sleep well and safely. Here is information to help you carefully choose where your baby sleeps.

### Where Should Your Baby Sleep?

- 1. Room-sharing** - sharing a room with your baby.  
Health Canada states that the safest place for your baby to sleep for the first six months is in a crib by the side of your bed within arm's reach. The crib must meet Canadian safety standards.
- 2. Bed-sharing** – sharing the same sleeping surface.  
Many breastfeeding parents lie down to breastfeed for one or more feedings. You may fall asleep while breastfeeding and comforting your baby whether you intend to or not. It is important to always create a safe space for your baby since unsafe bed sharing increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

### Bed sharing is unsafe if any of these apply:

- You are not breastfeeding
- You smoked during your pregnancy or if you or your partner smoke now
- You sleep on a waterbed, recliner, armchair, couch or bean bag chair
- Lots of pillows, a sagging mattress, a feather mattress or a sheepskin are used
- Heavy bedding, such as comforters or duvets are used
- The room is too hot
- You or your partner are under the influence of alcohol, or drugs including some medications
- There are other children who can climb into the bed
- There are pets that can climb into the bed
- There are stuffed toys on the bed that could cover your baby's face
- Your baby is premature and/or small for gestational age
- Your baby is sharing a bed with people other than you or your partner

## Caring for baby at night

Here are some suggestions to help you and baby get as much rest as possible.

- Keep the room fairly dark
- Keep your baby close
- Listen for early feeding cues
- Talk only in a soft, quiet voice
- Don't change your baby unless needed

## When babies don't settle

**It is normal for young babies to be more active at night and want to be close to you.**

Place your baby in skin to skin contact with you or your partner and gently rock your baby. Offer your breast again even if your baby just fed. There is no risk of feeding a breastfed baby too often. If you have had a hard night, try to rest during the day.



## How to minimize risk if bed sharing:

- Be aware of your baby and be responsible for your baby's safety while sleeping
- Breastfeed your baby
- Your baby must sleep on their back
- Sleep on a clean, firm mattress with tight fitting sheets and few pillows and blankets
- Place your mattress, without a frame, in the middle of the room. If this is not possible, be sure to block gaps near the bed that your baby could fall into.
- Make sure there is no furniture close to your mattress and be sure that your headboard, footboard and frame are tight to the mattress.
- Provide a smoke-free space. **If either parent smokes**, do not let your baby sleep in bed with you: room sharing is the better option.
- Set your heat a little lower-your body temperature will keep your baby warm enough and too much warmth increases the risk of SIDS.

If you have any questions, please call: Family Health Information Line at 705-474-1400 ext. 5351 or [healthy.families@healthunit.ca](mailto:healthy.families@healthunit.ca). Our nurses are available from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday

**References:**

Public Health Agency of Canada (2021). Safe Sleep for Your Baby

The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine Protocol #6 Bedsharing and Breastfeeding, Revision 2019

The Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine-Parent Handout: Physiologic Infant Care