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## 66. Strawberry How Nursery School

### Reducing the Risk of Cot Death

The cause of cot death is not known. However, you can reduce the risk by the measures detailed below. The most important are to lie a baby on his/her back to sleep (not front or side) and create a smoke-free zone for the baby.

#### What is cot death and how common is it?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the term used to describe when a baby dies suddenly for no reason, usually occurring at night. Cot death is uncommon. About 1 in 2,000 babies die due to cot death in the UK. Premature and low birth weights are at greater risk. Cot death occurs from two weeks to two years and the great majority of cases occur between two and six months (it peaks at four months). Few deaths occur after nine months and rarely in their second year. A significantly higher number of boys die of cot death than girls.

What can we do to reduce the risk?

Research has shown that the risk of cot death can be reduced. The things you can do fall into four main categories:

**Sleeping** – Learn the best way for the child to sleep.

**Smoking**- Create a smoke-free room for the baby.

**Symptoms of illness**- See a doctor if the baby appears unwell.

**Breast-feeding**

#### Sleeping

The best way for a baby to sleep is as follows:

- Lie the baby on his/her back.
- Cover just to the shoulders
- Use Layers of sheets and blankets rather than a duvet.
- Feet just touching the foot of the cot.

There is no evidence to show that babies who sleep on their backs will choke. Sleeping on their backs include daytime naps. When a baby is 5-6 months, they will start to roll over so the adult will need to roll them back onto their back. The risk of cot death falls sharply on the age.

#### Bedding

Do not use a pillow, just a firm mattress that fits well into the cot covered with a sheet. Mattresses should be cleaned regularly to help remove toxic gases which may be produced inside. It is advised to use sheets and blankets rather than a duvet. By using several layers, it allows you to add/take away as many layers depending on room temperature. Using sleeping bags, you don't need any other covers Aswell as they come

with different tog weights depending on the temperatures. Do not place soft materials or objects under the baby. Keep stuffed toys out of the cot and do not use bumper pads around the cot.

The baby's head must be left uncovered. Tuck any sheets/blankets under the sides of the mattress to stop them from riding up.

The baby's feet should be touching the foot of the cot; this stops them from sliding down under any covers.

Cot death occurs in the cold, wet seasons when respiratory infections are at their worst. Babies need to be warm but not too warm, being too warm increases the risk of cot death. The temperature should be comfortable for you. Do not place a baby's cot next to a radiator. Do not use hot water bottles or electric blankets.

Research has shown that the use of a dummy can reduce the risk of cot death. Offer a dummy before sleeping. If the dummy falls out whilst sleeping, leave it out do not force a dummy in. Clean and replace them regularly.

Cigarette smoke is a main 'risk factor' for cot death. Smoking during pregnancy also increases the risk.

### **Symptoms of illness**

Most cot deaths occur 'Out of the blue' when the child is sleeping. There are usually no symptoms to alert parents that anything is wrong. However, sometimes an illness is not recognised and quickly gets worse, see a doctor if you are worried. The list below is also a guide to the main symptoms:

Vomiting.

Taking less fluids or urinating less than usual.

Drowsiness.

Wheezy or grunting.

High fever/sweating a lot.

Looks pale or blue.

Blood in the nappy.

Rash.

Immunisations protect against serious illness and babies who are fully immunised are less at risk of cot death.

Research has shown that breast fed babies have a reduced risk of cot death compared to formula fed babies.

Date Issues: 22.04.2025

Review Due:22.04.2026

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