

Recommended: Infants sleep in parents' room

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

In a new policy statement issued in November, the nation's pediatricians recommend that infants sleep in the parents' room—ideally for the first year of life, but at least for the first six months.

Having an infant sleep on a separate surface and close to the parents' bed can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) by 50 percent, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

To be clear: The recommendation says **close to** the parents' bed, not **in** it. Sleeping in the same bed poses the risk of suffocating, strangulating, or entrapping the baby.

BREASTFEED THE BABY FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS.

The new recommendation from the academy's Task Force on SIDs seeks to reduce the deaths of 3,500 infants a year in the United States from sleep-related causes.

Previous recommendations, some dating from the 1990s, remain in effect:

- Remember: It's back to sleep for every sleep. Place infants wholly on their backs—not their sides—for naps as well as bedtime sleep until the child reaches the first birthday.
- Use a firm sleep surface. A firm mattress covered with a fitted sheet in a safety-approved crib is best. Don't use a soft mattress, such as those made from memory foam, and don't put the baby to sleep on a couch.
- Don't use pillows or other soft or loose bedding.

Comforters, blankets, non-fitted sheets, and bumper pads can obstruct a baby's nose and mouth. Avoid swaddling the infant.

- Avoid overheating and head covering of infants. Signs of overheating include sweating and the infant's chest feeling hot to the touch. One layer more than an adult would wear in cold weather should be enough.
- Consider offering a pacifier at bedtime and nap-time. How a pacifier protects the baby is unclear as yet. Don't force it, don't put it back in the mouth after the baby falls asleep, and don't put it on a string around the baby's neck.
- Be wary of commercial devices and home cardio-respiratory monitors. There's no evidence that these reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Pregnant? Follow guidelines for regular prenatal care.
- Avoid smoke exposure during pregnancy and after birth. Encourage smoke-free homes and cars.
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.
- Immunize infants according to your doctor's recommendations. Recent evidence suggests immunization may have a protective effect against SIDS.
- Breastfeed the baby for at least six months. Any breastfeeding is better than no breastfeeding.
- Use tummy time when the infant is awake to help strengthen the neck, shoulders, and arms. Placing the infant on the stomach for play also can help prevent the back of the head from flattening. Have an adult within reach during tummy time to supervise and observe the infant.

For the full policy statement containing the 2016 recommendations, see <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162938>. ■

?4U: Can we talk?

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Hearing a ding indicating a text message, Kiki looks at her phone. “TY, XOXO.”

“Let’s see,” she says to herself. “TY means thank you, and XOXO means kisses. I get it—this is Amy on her mom’s cell phone, thanking me for the birthday present.”

“How does the sweater fit?” Kiki texts back.

“GUD,” comes the reply.

“I’m sure she finds this fun,” Kiki thinks, “but will this 6-year-old ever learn to spell?”

Wanting to continue the conversation, Kiki asks, “What did you do on your birthday?”

“Movie WI BF.”

To understand this message, Kiki goes to webopedia.com, where she finds a list of more than 1,450 text abbreviations. “Oh, she went to a movie with her best friend,” she discovers.

After a few minutes of feeling old and obsolete, Kiki texts: “Amy, I’m glad we can text, but I really miss talking to you.”

A few minutes go by, and then Kiki hears her phone ring. “Hello?”

“Hi, Grandma,” says the voice at the other end of the line. “It’s me, Amy.”



Cell phones are wonderful for staying in touch with co-workers, friends, and family. Texting, in particular, can relay a message that the recipient can answer at a convenient time, without disrupting a meeting, sleep, or driving, for example.

In the example above, Grandma Kiki delights in getting a message from a granddaughter but longs for the more expressive sound of Amy’s voice and the immediacy of real-time talking. And truth be told, Grandma would really prefer face-to-face, in-person conversation, but perhaps that is not possible

for them, for whatever reason.

Scenes like this occur repeatedly today as we use and adapt to new technology. But we have to wonder: What’s the impact upon us as people and upon our relationships?

ENGAGE CHILDREN IN CONVERSATION.

“Face-to-face conversation is the most human and humanizing thing that we do,” writes media scholar Sherry Turkle, in *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. “Fully present to one another, it’s where we learn to listen. It’s where we develop the capacity for empathy. It’s where we experience the joy of being heard, being understood.” Furthermore, conversation “advances self-reflection, the conversations with ourselves that are the cornerstone of early development and continue throughout life.”

Preschoolers typically don’t have their own cell phones, nor should they. But they are observing how their parents’ continuous phone use takes away the attention they might receive. The result is that children take refuge in their own devices—video games, laptops, and eventually their own phones, and no one talks to each other.

As parents, we need to understand what’s at stake. Family conversations help children develop trust, self-esteem, empathy, and friendship. What can we do?

- Set an example by turning phones off or putting them away during family meals and the bath/bed-time routine.

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- Engage children in conversation. Invite them to talk about what happened during the day, without hurrying or interrupting. Listen to both their words and body language.
 - Understand that good conversations take patience and practice.
 - Don't answer or return calls and texts from people you don't know.
 - Model respectful phone behavior, such as not spreading gossip, not taking or sending photos without a person's permission, and not having personal conversations in public places.
- When children are old enough to have their own phones, set limits on their use.
- Consider buying a basic phone without a camera or Internet connections.
 - Prohibit phone use at the dinner table, until homework is done, and after bedtime.
 - Monitor cell phone use. As parents, we have the right and duty to review calls and texts to make sure children are safe.

"Every technology causes us to reflect on our human values," Turkle says. Are we coming to the point that we and our children don't have time to talk to each other? Are we developing fake relationships?

For more information

Davis, Susan. 2012. Is Your Child Ready for a Cell Phone? WebMD, www.webmd.com/parenting/features/children-and-cell-phones#4.

Turkle, Sherry. 2015. *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in a Digital Age*. New York: Penguin. ■

Food waste vs. hunger: How to help

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

It's a sad irony: 40 percent of food in the United States is wasted, and yet 1 in 6 American children is going hungry.

According to SaveTheFood.com, half the food wasted is done by consumers, and the rest by farmers, grocery stores, restaurants, and other parts of the food chain. An average American family of four, for example, throws away \$1,500 worth of food a year.

Wasted food translates to billions of dollars wasted on water, energy, fertilizers, cropland, and production costs. Nearly all the food waste ends up in landfills, where it releases methane, "a form of climate pollution that is up to 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide."

Tips for saving food with children:

- Breastfeed infants.
- Check with your doctor about when to introduce solid foods.
- If you use commercially prepared baby food, spoon a small amount into a bowl for feeding. Don't feed directly from the jar.
- When the baby is 8 or 9 months old, begin exploring table foods, one at a time. Puree the same food you eat, and offer a tiny serving. You can always offer seconds.
- Save untouched foods, even tiny amounts, and add to soup or pasta.
- Plan meals in advance. Check the refrigerator and pantry to see what you might use in the next few days.
- Go to the store with a list. You'll buy less, resist impulse purchases, and make fewer shopping trips.
- Think carefully about sale items. When confronted with two-for-one graham crackers, for example, ask yourself whether the family will eat two boxes before the crackers expire.
- Store food properly. You can store bananas on the counter until they ripen, for example, and then refrigerate or freeze.
- Throw spoiled fruits and vegetables, peelings, and food that has fallen on the floor into a compost bin. Use the resulting organic matter on flower beds, potted plants, and garden.

See www.savethefood.com for more food-saving tips on such topics as reviving wilted food, storing food, freezing food, understanding expiration dates, and cooking leftover odds and ends.

SaveTheFood.com is a campaign of the Ad Council, a nonprofit organization that has produced public service communications for 75 years. They're the ones that gave us "Only you can prevent forest fires," "A mind is a terrible thing to waste," and "Friends don't let friends drive drunk."

The Ad Council also has a hunger prevention campaign, which encourages support for FeedingAmerica.org, a nonprofit organization of more than 200 food banks nationwide. Parents can find local food banks and information about free meals for children in the summer at www.feedingamerica.org. ■

