

Bedsharing, Co-Sleeping, SIDS, Smothering and how these issues affect BFHI

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1. SIDS and smothering are not the same, and the risk factors are not the same. A diagnosis of SIDS – by definition – means the child did NOT die from smothering, suffocation, or entrapment. Soft bedding, prone position, waterbeds, bean bags and couches increase the risk of death from smothering, entrapment and suffocation, but not SIDS. Smoking during pregnancy is strongly correlated to deaths from SIDS, but not smothering, suffocation, or entrapment. Many studies fail to differentiate SIDS from other causes of death including suffocation.
2. Studies cited to support “all bedsharing is risky” allegations fail to control for the relationship of the bedpartner with the baby (mother vs. other), condition of the bedpartner (alcohol / drug use, smoking), safety of the surface (Ostfeld includes sofas and beds in the same “bedsharing” definition; Tappin includes cots and “moses baskets”), and/or method of feeding (formula-feeding mothers sleep quite differently from BF mothers).
3. A breastfeeding mother sleeps differently with her baby than anybody else. She faces her baby, adopts a protective posture (“cuddle curl”) with an arm above the baby and leg bent below, which prevents the baby from moving into a dangerous position in bed. Her body is very responsive to the baby’s subtle cues with frequent touching, spontaneous arousals, and synchronous sleep.
4. Exclusively breastfeeding mothers who bedshare safely get more sleep than either partially breastfeeding mothers or mothers who do not bedshare.
5. Bedsharing mothers have higher levels of prolactin and breastfeed more exclusively and longer than mothers who do not bedshare.
6. Babies need to be touched. Separating the mother and baby raises stress hormones in both.
7. Pacifiers compromise breastfeeding at all stages in the breastfeeding cycle. The research supporting the allegation that “pacifiers prevent SIDS” is weak and significantly flawed.
8. As of June 2008, the strongest risk factor for SIDS is prenatal smoking. Formula-feeding more than doubles the risk of SIDS. The strongest risk factors for rollover and smothering deaths are unsafe surfaces especially couches or sofas; alcohol or drug use; and bed partners other than the mother. Prone position is a strong risk factor for positional asphyxia.
9. No research to date indicates risk to the baby from a sober (drug-free), non-smoking, breastfeeding mother on a safe surface.

References:

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Safety issues for breastfeeding and bedsharing

<i>DO practice safety during bedsharing</i>	<i>DO NOT bedshare all night if</i>
Bedpartners are:	Bedpartners are:
Breastfeeding mother	Formula feeding adult
Conscious decision by both parents to bedshare	Accidental bedsharing
Non-smoking (never smoke)	Any tobacco smoking, even outside
Sober and drug-free	Alcohol and/or drug use
Parents of the baby	Non-parents; siblings
No pets	Animals
Baby's position:	Baby's position:
Baby on her back (supine)	Baby in prone or side-lying position
Baby unwrapped, free to wiggle and move	Baby is swaddled / bundled in a blanket
Bedding / sleep surface:	Bedding / sleep surface:
Firm, flat, clean mattress	Couch/sofa; arm chair; soft/saggy mattress; waterbed
No holes/spaces/places that could trap baby	Holes/spaces/places that could trap baby
Tightly fitting sheets under baby	Loose sheets or blankets under baby
No pillows or blankets near baby's face	Pillows or blankets around baby
No thick duvets or comforters	Thick covers on/over baby
Room comfortable temperature, not overheated	Overheated room