

## Tips for Nurses Teaching Safe Sleep in the Hospital Setting

<p>Most parents appreciate us talking to them about safe sleep for their infant</p>	<p>Don't let fear of conflict keep you from bringing up the topic. Those that do not want to hear usually have an "issue" with one of the recommendations (most often bed-sharing) but chances are good they will not with the rest. Our job is to educate. No need to argue or coerce.</p>
<p>We know that people accept change better when heard from people they trust</p>	<p>And, parents trust us! Billboards and public service announcements may convince some, but not near as many as those hearing it from their nurse who is willing to problem solve with them.</p>
<p>We are role models, and parents will copy what they see us do (and not do).</p>	<p>We are powerful change agents! We must be diligent to model the safe sleep recommendations in the hospital, and say something to when parents are not. Chances are good they think what they are doing is safe and if we do not say anything they will go home assuming it is.</p>
<p>Understand that we all take risks. A "risk-reduction" approach will be more effective than an all-or-nothing "risk-elimination" approach</p>	<p>Some of us, in good intention, take more of a risk-<i>elimination</i> approach when teaching safe sleep by insisting that all the recommendations be followed just as written. Though it would great if parents did, some may not, and if we alienate these parents we risk them not hearing the other recommendations. There is a "dose-dependent" nature to safe sleep, so following some of the recommendations is certainly better than none. Our job is to educate and encourage. If parents chose to not follow our advice, do not let it keep you from speaking up about the rest of the recommendations.</p>
<p>Be supportive even if parents do not think they can follow all of the recommendations, but also speak up when there is a serious risk for danger.</p>	<p>Be conversational in your approach and use phrases such as "safer" and "safest". Avoid "never" and other all-or-nothing terms as much as possible. <b>That being said, there are some practices that are extremely dangerous, such as bed-sharing with a baby born premature or with parents that smoke, so at times stronger (but kind) words about the risk they will be taking need to be used.</b></p>
<p>Breastfeeding and Safe Sleep are compatible!!!</p>	<p>Both can promote each other's message. We all want the same thing – safe and healthy babies!</p>
<p>Teaching safe sleep can be time consuming – there are a lot of recommendations to cover!</p>	<p>So, take advantage of handouts and videos. There are lots of resources out there and many for free from the NIH and other organizations. A crib card connected to the basinet with the recommendations clearly stated can be a great help to nurses and a constant reminder for parents</p>
<p>Consider teaching safe sleep in a 3-tiered approach. This way the parents hear it from the</p>	<p><i>First</i>, soon after the infant is born discuss the safe sleep basics (i.e. A-alone, B-back, C-safe crib). A crib</p>

<p>time of birth and have time to discuss and problem solve before going home</p>	<p>card is perfect for this.  <i>Second</i>, during the hospital stay, or towards the time of discharge, provide and review the full list of recommendations, and/or show a short video.  <i>Third</i>, at the time of discharge, ask the parents about their sleep plan for the infant and if they have any questions about the recommendations. Be prepared to answer questions and problem solve with them.</p>
<p>If you're just not an advocate of Safe Sleep...</p>	<p><i>Please teach and model it anyway.</i> The evidence is very strong; many babies are dying simply because parents didn't know better. Parents need to at least be given the information so they can decide for themselves.</p>
<p>Be prepared!</p>	<p>The more you know about the recommendations, the evidence supporting them, and the common concerns parents have, the more confident you will feel in discussing the topic with them.</p>
<p>A hospital policy can help everyone</p>	<p>If your hospital does not have a clear infant sleep policy that endorses the safe sleep recommendations, you need one! A policy will create an environment of uniformity of nursing practice. There is nothing worse than having a parent tell you something like, "well my night nurse didn't say anything about it." Inconsistent practice undermines the message and places nurses trying to model and teach in an uncomfortable position. A unified safe sleep message and consistent practice in the hospital will speak loudly to our parents of its importance for when they go home.</p>