



# Infant Safe Sleep Policy Fact Sheet

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) is committed to promoting optimal health and safety for all Ohio infants and to reducing infant mortality. ODH recognizes its leadership role in establishing standards for policies and practices that promote healthy behaviors among its employees, programs, subgrantees, and other state agencies for what ODH believes to be in the best interest of Ohio's residents. The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent infant safe sleep message across all department programs and activities.

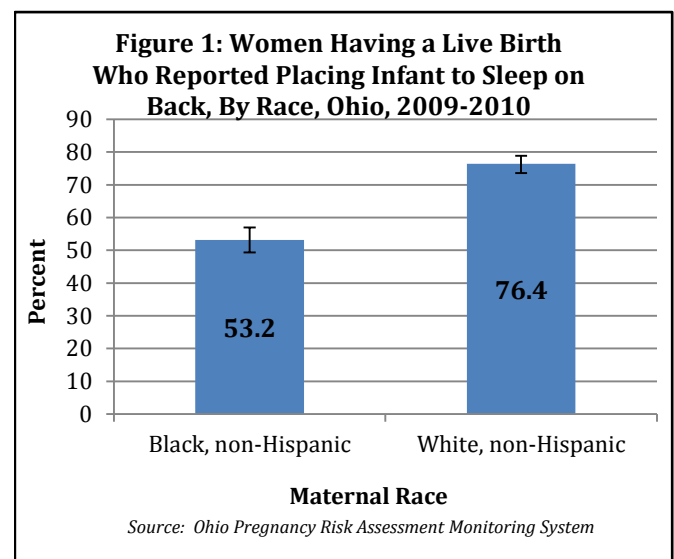
## Importance of Safe Sleep Message

Sleep-related infant deaths are those that happen suddenly and unexpectedly in a sleep environment. The causes include sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), accidental suffocation, positional asphyxia, overlay, and undetermined causes. Sleep-related deaths are the leading cause of death between one month and one year of age. All infants are at risk: urban, rural and suburban; white, black and other races; bottlefed and breastfed; rich and poor. Providing a clear consistent message encouraging all families to always place their babies to sleep on their back in a safe environment is an important step in reducing infant mortality in Ohio.

## Facts About Sleep-Related Deaths in Ohio

- More than three Ohio infant deaths each week are sleep-related.<sup>2</sup>
- Infant sleep-related deaths outnumber deaths of children of all ages (0-17 years) from vehicular crashes.<sup>2</sup>
- Forty-two percent of infant deaths from one month to one year old are sleep related.<sup>2</sup>
- Sixty percent of sleep-related deaths occurred in adult beds, on couches or on chairs; only 23 percent occurred in cribs or bassinets.<sup>2</sup>
- Sixty-six percent occurred to infants who were sharing a sleep surface with another person.<sup>2</sup>

Placing infants on their back to sleep is an important way to reduce the risk of sleep-related death. While 72 percent of mothers reported placing their infant to sleep on his/her back in 2009-2010, black non-Hispanic mothers were less likely to do this than white, non-Hispanic mothers (shown in Figure 1).



## Policy

ODH has established the following policy to ensure that accurate and consistent messages are provided by every employee and program as well as subgrantees and other state agencies:

In all activities and publications, ODH programs and subgrantees shall adhere to the infant safe sleep standards as endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) in their Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome's report, *SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment*.<sup>1</sup>

## Procedures

1. ODH programs, subgrantees, and contractors must adopt this ODH Infant Safe Sleep Policy which shall be routinely communicated to all staff.
2. While it is not possible to guarantee complete prevention of SIDS-related deaths, ODH shall urge parents and caregivers to follow AAP recommendations (see right column) as the most effective way to reduce the risk of sleep-related infant death.
3. ODH requires that safe sleep messages be delivered in culturally appropriate methods to reach diverse populations; and that messages be linguistically suitable for various literacy levels and sensitive to family history of infant death.
4. All publications shall adhere to the safe sleep image guidelines established by First Candle in August, 2009.<sup>3</sup> Photographs should not depict inappropriate sleeping environments unless for teaching about the harms of those situations.



### Promoting Safe Sleep for All Ohio Infants!

For more information about the full policy and procedures, please contact:

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## Safe Sleep Recommendations

- Place infants to sleep wholly on the back for every sleep, nap time and night time.
- Use a firm sleep surface. A firm crib mattress with a tight-fitting sheet in a safety-approved crib is the recommended surface.
- Room-sharing without bedsharing – the infant’s crib should be in the parents’ bedroom, close to the parents’ bed.
- Keep soft objects, loose bedding, and bumper pads out of the crib.
- Breastfeeding is recommended.
- Offer a pacifier at sleep time after breastfeeding has been established.
- Avoid overheating by excessive clothing, bundling, or room temperature.
- Avoid commercial devices such as wedges, positioners, and monitors marketed to reduce the risk of SIDS. None have been proven safe or effective.
- All infants should be immunized in accordance with AAP and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations.
- Women should receive regular prenatal and postpartum care.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy. Avoid exposure of infants and pregnant women to secondhand smoke.
- Not a single drop of alcohol or illicit drugs should be consumed during pregnancy, after birth, or while breastfeeding.

### References:

1. Policy Statement: SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment, *Pediatrics*, October 2011. [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2011-2284](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2011-2284).
2. Ohio Child Fatality Review, 2006-2010 Deaths.
3. Safe Sleep Saves Lives! Image Guidelines, First Candle, August 2009. [www.firstcandle.org/?s=safe+sleep+image+guidelines](http://www.firstcandle.org/?s=safe+sleep+image+guidelines).



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