

# Keep Your Baby Safe during Sleep



Well Child  
Tamariki Ora

**Every year, too many  
New Zealand babies die  
suddenly during sleep.**

**Many of these deaths  
can be prevented.**

**You can help protect  
your baby from dying  
suddenly in their  
sleep by:**

- 1. PLACE** baby in their own bed  
for every sleep (and close to  
parents/caregivers at night)
- 2. ELIMINATE** smoking in pregnancy,  
in the whānau and in the home
- 3. POSITION** baby on their back  
for sleep
- 4. ENCOURAGE** and support Mum,  
so baby is breastfed

This pamphlet describes the best ways to protect your baby from dying suddenly in their sleep. It aligns with the Child and Youth Mortality Review Committee publication, *Special Report: Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy* (June 2017). This report is available online at [hcsc.govt.nz/resources/resource-library/sudden-unexpected-death-in-infancy-special-report/](http://hcsc.govt.nz/resources/resource-library/sudden-unexpected-death-in-infancy-special-report/)

# Make Every Sleep a Safe Sleep

**Always follow these safe sleep routines for your baby and your baby's bed.**

## Make sure your baby is safe

- Always sleeps on their back to keep their airways clear
- Is in their own bed such as a bassinet, wahakura, pēpi-pod® or other baby-safe sleep bed
- Has a parent/caregiver who is alert to their needs and free from alcohol or drugs

## Make sure your baby's bed is safe

- Has a firm and flat mattress – to keep baby's airways open
- Has no gaps between the frame and the mattress – that could trap or wedge baby
- Has nothing in the bed that might cover baby's face or lift their head – no pillows, toys, loose bedding or bumper pads
- Is close to the parents/caregivers at night for the first 6 months of life



## Make sure your baby is healthy and strong

- **Smokefree** in pregnancy and after birth – protecting their lungs and airways
- **Exclusively breastfed** to around 6 months of age and continues to be breastfed to 12 months of age
- **Immunised** on time

If you choose to sleep in bed with your baby, put them in their own baby bed beside you – for example, a pēpi-pod® or wahakura. This may help reduce the risk of your baby suffocating while they are asleep. Information about using a pēpi-pod® or wahakura is available online at [sudinationalcoordination.co.nz/resources](http://sudinationalcoordination.co.nz/resources) and [pepipod.co.nz](http://pepipod.co.nz)

It is never safe to put your baby to sleep in an adult bed, on a couch or on a chair.

Car seats protect your baby when travelling in the car. Don't use them as a cot or bassinet.



Pēpi-Pod® and wahakura are available at no cost for whānau who meet certain criteria. Contact your midwife or the SUDI National Coordination team, email [hauora@hapai.co.nz](mailto:hauora@hapai.co.nz) for more information. If you need financial assistance so that baby can have their own bed, you may be eligible for help from Work and Income. For more information visit [workandincome.govt.nz](http://workandincome.govt.nz) or call 0800 559 009.

# Protect your baby's head shape

When your baby is sleeping, turn their head so that sometimes they face left and sometimes they face right.

Tummy time while baby is awake will help protect their head shape and make their arms strong.

- Back for sleep
- Front for play
- Upright for cuddles and hugs



## More information

- Speak to your midwife, Well Child Tamariki Ora nurse, doctor or practice nurse
- Ring PlunketLine on 0800 933 922
- Visit the Ministry of Health website: [health.govt.nz](http://health.govt.nz)
- Other websites:
  - National SUDI Prevention Coordination Service: [sudinationalcoordination.co.nz](http://sudinationalcoordination.co.nz)
  - Change for Our Children: [changeforourchildren.co.nz](http://changeforourchildren.co.nz)

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Te Whatu Ora

