

Keeping Babies Safe - Babies Sharing their Mother's Bed / Co-Sleeping and SIDS - Summary Clinical Guideline

Reference No.: CL/MAT/03:18/B7

Definitions:

- **Bed-sharing:** sharing a bed with one or both parents while baby and parents are asleep
- **Co-sleeping:** an adult and baby sleeping together on any surface (such as a bed, chair or sofa).

Guidance:

- Discuss the benefits of, and increased risks associated with co-sleeping to enable them to make a fully informed decision
- Ensure all mothers have the leaflet 'Safer Sleep for babies- A Guide for parents' sharing a bed with your baby'
- Carry out an individual risk assessment for every mother and baby prior to bed-sharing
- Review risk assessment as required.

Once the risk assessment has been carried out:

- Inform the mother that we do not recommend co-sleeping in bed or chair with their baby whilst in hospital, however, we recommend the baby is placed in their cot
- Discuss the benefits of skin-to-skin contact with mother. Skin contact can help regulate the baby's temperature, calms the baby and encourages breastfeeding. Facilitate skin contact by undressing the baby and assisting with the mother's clothing as appropriate. Note: babies should never be swaddled in wraps or blankets when sharing a bed with their mother.
- If breastfeeding, ensure the baby is well attached and effectively feeding at the breast.
- Take measures to ensure that the physical environment is as safe as possible and that the baby is protected from falling out of bed/chair (see appendix A), whilst sharing bed/chair with mother.
- Ensure the mother has easy access to the call system.
- Draw the curtains back, so if mother/carer falls asleep with baby staff are more likely see be aware.
- **Assess and record the level of supervision required in the hand held records and then implement appropriately**
- When handing care to another member of staff, ensure that they are aware that mother and baby are sharing a bed and the level of supervision required.
- Reassess level of supervision according to individual needs. & document.

Before Transfer Home or Following a Home Birth

Parents should watch the Discharge DVD which explains about safe infant sleeping. Other resources include information that parents can download from the internet are from the Lullaby Trust and from the Infant Sleep Safe Information resource highlighted in the video and hand held records.

Staff should also discuss with all parents, whether or not they have shared a bed/**chair in hospital:**

- The increased dangers of bed-sharing if *either* the mother/or partner (carer):
 - is a smoker.
 - Has consumed alcohol or taken drugs which alter consciousness or cause drowsiness.
- The dangers of:
 - bed-sharing when unusually tired (i.e. to a point where parents (carer) would find it difficult to respond to their baby).
 - sleeping with a baby on a sofa, waterbed, bean bag or a sagging mattress.
 - letting a baby sleep alone in an adult bed.
 - letting a baby sleep with other children or pets and the ways to reduce the risk of accidents.

- The importance of ensuring that the baby does not overheat whilst bed-sharing.
- The benefits of bed-sharing to successful breastfeeding in the absence of contra-indications.
- The benefits of bed-sharing for settling and comforting babies.
- The benefits of keeping baby close and sleeping in a separate cot or Moses basket in the same room as the parent(s) for the 1st 6 months.

Safer Sleep for Babies

Complete the Safe Sleep for Babies assessment form on first postnatal visit at home

Positioning in the Cot.

- Baby should always be placed on their back as part of their regular sleep routine and not on their side or front (**unless the baby has a cleft palate, when side lying is advised for medical reasons**).
- Parents need to be aware that a baby sleeping on its side or front has an increased risk of SIDS.
- A baby who has rolled onto their tummy, should be turned back onto their back again, until they can roll from back to front and back again on their own, when they can be left to find their own position.
- Place baby in the feet to foot (of the cot) position so that baby can't wriggle down under the blankets
- Baby should sleep on a firm waterproof mattress in good condition.
- Room temperature should be between 16-20° C, with light weight bedding or a lightweight well-fitting baby sleep bag.
- Use blankets that are firmly tucked in, and are no higher than the babies shoulder or sleep bag
- Baby needs to be checked regularly to ensure he / she is not too hot or cold.

Twins

Twins can be co bedded in the same cot as per the diagrams, using the principles as defined above (Infant Sleep Safe Information)

