



## Place baby on his or her back to sleep, for naps and at night.

*Stomach or side sleeping increases the risk of SIDS death.*

### Why Back to Sleep?

- Placing your baby on his or her back to sleep helps to keep your baby from getting too hot.
- Back sleeping helps prevent your baby from rebreathing air that has already been breathed out.
- Sleeping on the tummy is not safe. Tummy sleeping can change how well your baby's heart and lungs work, which can lower how much oxygen gets to your baby's brain.
- Side sleeping is not safe. Placing your baby on his or her side increases the chance your baby will roll onto his or her tummy.



Begin every sleep with your baby on his or her back. If your baby rolls back and forth from the back to the stomach, do not wake your baby. Leave your baby in the position baby chooses.



**ALSO IN THIS SERIES:**  
Baby Behavior: Sleep  
Sleep Surface  
Tummy Time

### Let's Talk - Back to Sleep

Babies spend longer time in light sleep than adults, which helps them wake easier and may protect them from SIDS.

For content resources, visit: [dshs.texas.gov/SafeInfantSleep](https://dshs.texas.gov/SafeInfantSleep)

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## Family and Caregiver Common Questions

### Do babies sleep better and longer on their tummies?

The answer is not simply yes or no. Babies who sleep on their tummies sleep more deeply, are less reactive to noise, and move around less. Light sleep is a normal sleep pattern for new babies and is protective against SIDS. Research shows sleeping on their tummy increases their risk for:

- Rebreathing gases that can affect how much oxygen the baby gets causing baby to move less, and limiting their ability to breathe new, fresh air
- Slowed heart rate and lowered blood pressure
- Raised body temperature due to overheating

While longer and deeper sleep may seem like a relief to parents who are very tired, sleeping longer and deeper puts babies at greater risk for SIDS and other sleep-related death.

### Will my baby choke if my baby sleeps on his or her back?

Healthy, full-term babies naturally swallow or cough up fluids—it's a reflex we are born with. Babies may clear these fluids better when sleeping on their backs. This is because the baby's trachea lies on top of the esophagus, so anything vomited or spit up from the stomach must go against gravity to get into the trachea and cause choking.

When on his or her stomach, fluids that leave the baby's esophagus can collect at the opening of the trachea, making choking more likely (see graphic.)

### Will my baby get flat head from sleeping on his or her back?

When babies are laid down in the same position too often or too long, pressure on the same part of their head can cause flat spots. Flat spots are usually not dangerous and typically go away on their own. Flat spots are not linked to long-term problems with the head shape, but any concerns or questions should be discussed by the parent or caregiver with the baby's doctor.

Making sure your baby gets enough tummy time when awake is one way to help prevent flat spots. Try to avoid using a car seat carrier for baby to sleep. Instead, use only for travel. Changing the direction that baby lays in the sleeping area from week to week can also help to relieve the pressure placed on one single area.

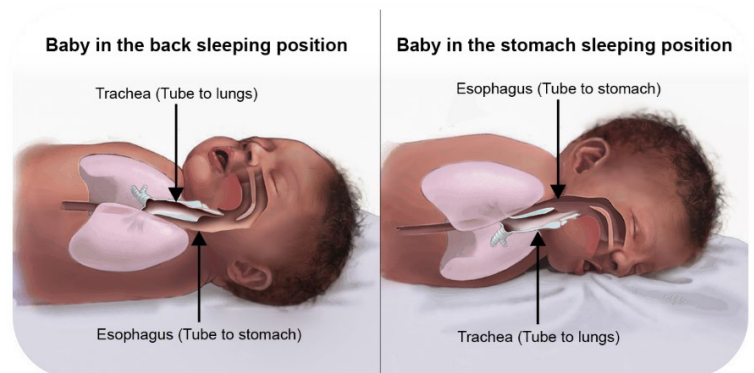


Image source: Image courtesy of the Safe to Sleep® campaign.

### Let's Talk - Circle of Support

Continue to share safe infant sleep information with parents and caregivers throughout the first year to increase their use of safe sleep practices!

For content resources, visit:  
[dshs.texas.gov/SafeInfantSleep](https://dshs.texas.gov/SafeInfantSleep)