



ACT Children & Young People Death Review Committee

SAFE SLEEPING

The ACT Children and Young People Death Review Committee was established to help reduce preventable deaths of children and young people in the ACT. More information is available at:
www.childdeathcommittee.act.gov.au

The Committee has identified that since July 2004 more than 20 children have died in the ACT in unsafe sleeping situations. These might be because of co-sleeping with their parent, sleeping on unsafe surfaces such as sofas or on unsafe or ill fitting mattresses. All of these children were infants less than one year of age. The Committee is concerned that without a change in current sleeping practices more babies will undoubtedly die

The community organisation [Red Nose](https://rednose.com.au/) states that the safest place for all babies to sleep is in their own safe sleeping spaces, in the same room as their parent or caregiver, for the first six to twelve months of their life. The [Red Nose](https://rednose.com.au/) website at <https://rednose.com.au/> provides information to help you make sure your baby sleeps safely.

How can my baby sleep safely?

On a separate sleep surface in a safe cot that meets recommended Australian safety standards.

The cot can be placed directly next to the adult bed, with the side down if necessary, to enable immediate contact with the baby, but making it impossible for the sleeping parent to roll onto the infant, or for the infant to roll onto the parent's bed.

Put the baby's feet at the foot of the cot, not in the middle of the cot.

Babies should always be put to sleep on their backs.

The cot bedding should be a sheet with light weight blankets that can be tucked in at the sides. There should be no cot bumpers, pillows, sheep skins or soft toys – they are just not safe.

The room should be well ventilated – no cigarette or marijuana smoke in the house.

The room temperature should be between 16 and 18 degrees. If the room is cold, put more clothing on the baby and perhaps an extra tuckable blanket, but do not use any other extra bedding such as doonas or hot water bags and never sleep with your baby to provide warmth.



Sleeping with your infant

Should you choose to co-sleep with your infant, there are some very important steps you can take to help reduce the risk.

Do not sleep in the same bed as your baby if:

- you, or your partner have drunk any alcohol
- you, or your partner have taken any prescription or recreational drugs, including marijuana
- you, or your partner are very tired or exhausted
- you or your partner are smokers
- you are sleeping on a sofa bed, couch or waterbed
- your baby was born prematurely or particularly small (under 3000 grams)
- there are other children or adults in the bed, or
- your baby could slip under adult bedding such as a doona or pillow – in the many places in the world where babies sleep with their parents, the bed is usually the floor, or a similar hard surface with light weight rugs and either no or firm, small pillows; there are no doonas or soft pillows.

Cot safety in the home

Australia has a law that states that all cots must comply with the Australian standards. The mandatory standard is based on certain sections of the voluntary Australian and New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 2172:2003 Cots for household use - safety requirements. These standards are designed to prevent falls, entrapment and strangulation. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's product safety website at www.productsafety.gov.au states that to ensure cot safety in your home, make sure your cot:

- is assembled according to its instructions
- has locking mechanisms that work and operate safely with repeated use (on moving drop side cots)
- is fitted with only the mattress designed specifically for it – ill fitting mattresses can create dangerous gaps that can trap a sleeping child and cause suffocation
- never has an extra mattress in it – while the mattress in the cot might look thin and uncomfortable to you, it has been designed for the safety and comfort of your baby
- is set up so the cot is out of reach of blinds and curtain cords and kept away from heaters and other electrical appliances
- is always taken back to the supplier to organise repairs that will ensure safety
- should parts of your cot break – never modify a cot yourself.

Promoting a safe sleep, every sleep