



### FAMIPED

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## Sudden infant death syndrome: Can it be prevented?

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[Volumen 4. Nº 4. Diciembre 2011](#) [1]

### What is sudden infant death syndrome?

This is called to an infant sudden death while sleeping, without any other reasons. Its cause is unknown.

### Is it very frequent?

Frequency can vary according to the different geographical areas. Fortunately, in Spain, it is low if we compare it to other countries in our surroundings: 1,7 cases per each 10000 alive newborns.

### When is it more frequent?

Although it has been pointed out that SIDS is typical is babies under one, it is when babies are 2-4 months that most deaths occur. Over 6 months old, it is very infrequent.

### Are factors or situations which contribute to its onset known?

Some factors or situations are known. Some cannot be changed. Among them, some are: low weight when being born or the history of a brother who died because of SIDS. Young, single mothers also seem to have a higher risk.

### After all, can parents do anything to reduce risks?

Nowadays there are a lot of situations that can be changed by parents in order to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome:

- Baby position in the cradle when sleeping: sleeping face down increases the risk. Hence, parents must place it face up (not sideways) until they are 6 months old.
- Kind of mattress: hard mattresses are recommended since soft ones are linked to the rise of sudden death.
- Temperature: wrapping the baby up in excess is to be avoided. Babies do not feel “colder” than their parents and the excess of clothes when sleeping is linked to a higher risk of sudden death. This is to be even highlighted if the boy has fever (the belief of “wrapping it up more if there is fever” is not true). Baby’s room temperature is another important factor. An average temperature of 20-22 ° C is recommended. High temperatures will be avoided if this can be measured individually.

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- Smoking during pregnancy and after birth: smoking, during pregnancy and after birth is linked to many infant diseases. The most dramatic of all is sudden infant death. Pregnancy, for a smoking mother, can be an excellent reason to give this habit up.
- Kind of breastfeeding. It is known that mother breastfeeding reduces the risk of sudden death. Therefore, mothers will be encouraged to initiate this kind of breastfeeding and keep it as long as possible.
- Dummy: recent Studies have proved two important facts: using a dummy reduces the risk of SIDS and its use does not reduce mother breastfeeding duration. Hence, it is recommendable to use it if the baby accepts it when placed in the cradle to sleep.

To sum up, parents can do a lot to create a good environment where the risk for this event to occur can diminish. This event is dramatic but, fortunately, it is not frequent in our country.

There are some websites and articles on the Internet if you want to have more information on this matter:

KidsHealth: "*Sudden infant death syndrome*". Authorized translation in Observatorio FAROS del Hospital Sant Joan de Déu de Barcelona's website: <http://www.faroshsjd.net/item.php?id=1094&lang=1> [2] Information for parents and families.

*Prevention of sudden infant death syndrome.*

Recommendations PrevInfad -PAPPS: [http://www.aepap.org/previnfad/rec\\_muertesubita.htm](http://www.aepap.org/previnfad/rec_muertesubita.htm) [3] Information for healthcare professionals but written in affordable language for parents.

*Breastfeeding period is linked to a lower risk of sudden infant death syndrome*

. Evid Pediatr. 2011;7:61. <http://www.evidenciasenpediatria.es/files/41-11347-RUTA/61AVC.pdf> [4] Although this is an article for healthcare professionals, its conclusions can be easily understood by all kind of readers.

*Using a Dummy to sleep reduces the risk of sudden infant death syndrome*

. Evid Pediatr.

2006;2:21. <http://www.evidenciasenpediatria.es/files/41-10569-RUTA/Usarchupetedormirreducelriesgode.pdf> [5]

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