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Safe to Breathe

protecting babies when they sleep



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Welcome

- Welcome to this presentation on protecting babies when they sleep
- How safe are your arms? Do they know how to make every sleep a safe sleep?
- This presentation provides essential education for protecting babies under 12 months old while they sleep.
- It will support you with knowledge about how babies breathe, what makes them vulnerable and how to create safe settings for their sleep.
- For some, this will be new information and for others a refresher, but it is essential that everyone entrusted with the care of babies is aligned with this evidence-based knowledge.
- This education has voice-over. If using the voice-over, ensure the volume on your computer is up. Ensure you view in "slide show" mode and use mouse to click to next slide and start the audio. It will take about 10-15 minutes to go through the slide show including activities on slide 7.

Sleeping babies need to breathe



Sleeping babies need to breathe - and stay breathing.

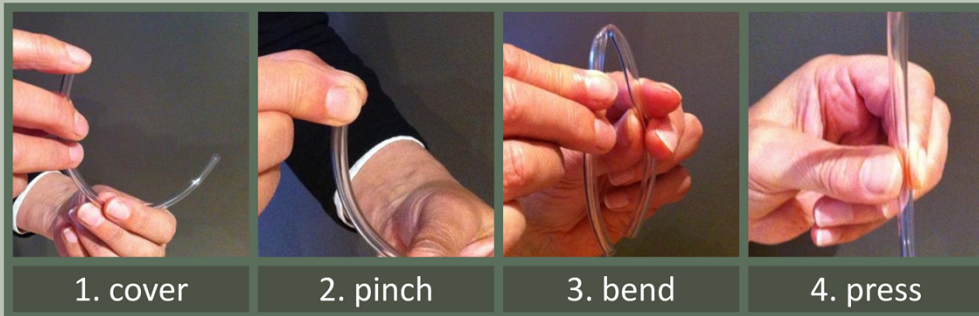
- Oxygen is essential to life. It reaches babies through tubes.
 - through blood vessels during pregnancy
 - and through airways once born.
- If oxygen cannot pass through these tubes, babies can die - and these deaths are preventable.
- From the very first breath, **position** becomes critical to staying alive.

Four ways babies can suffocate



1. Covered face
2. Pinched nose
3. Chin-to-chest position of the neck
4. Pressure on, or against, the chest

Use a tube to demonstrate to others



Understanding how babies can suffocate.

- This slide explains the 4 ways that babies can suffocate.
- Using a plastic tube to simulate airways, you can see how air flow is restricted, or stopped, if the tube
 - becomes covered or pinched at the opening,
 - or gets bent or pressed against
- Any situation that leads to
 - a covered face
 - a pinched nose
 - a 'chin to chest' (or bent) position of the neck
 - or pressure on or against the chestcan slow or block the flow of oxygen to a baby.

The next three slides explain what must be considered when assessing the safety of sleep for babies in their first year.

1. Consider age of development



Ways that babies are different from adults:

a baby has a

- large head
- bulge behind
- loose jaw
- short neck
- big tongue

and

- only breathes through the nose

The needs of development matter

- Babies are not mini adults. Their systems take time to mature.
- Unlike adults, for example, a baby starts out with
 - a large and heavy head,
 - loose jaw joints
 - and only breathes through the nose.
- The heavy head acts like a weight, keeping a baby safe when lying flat and on the back.
- But if that head falls forward for any reason it can place a baby at risk. They may get into positions or situations that make it hard for them to breathe.

2. Consider baby vulnerability



Growing conditions matter.

- Sub-optimal conditions **weaken babies** as they develop. For example
 - Smoking in pregnancy takes oxygen from babies so they develop as if low oxygen is normal.
 - This weakens their breathing and defences and they may fail to recognise danger if oxygen levels fall.Low birth weight babies, and those born prematurely are also more vulnerable
 - For these babies, how and where they sleep becomes vital to their survival.
- Resilient, stronger babies are one who are:
 - Smokefree
 - Breastfed
 - Immunized
 - Handled gently

3. Consider the sleep setting



Sleep conditions matter.

- Safe sleep for babies means **being** on the back and **always** able to breathe freely.
- Breathing is best protected when sleep environments consider all the following:
 - **Position:** flat, level and on the back
 - **Bedding:** clear of the face, no soft or loose items, a mattress that fits the space
 - **Location:** in own sleep space or baby bed
 - **Proximity:** close to a responsive and able carer
- These principles create the setting for safe infant sleep at home and when away from home

Spot the hazards



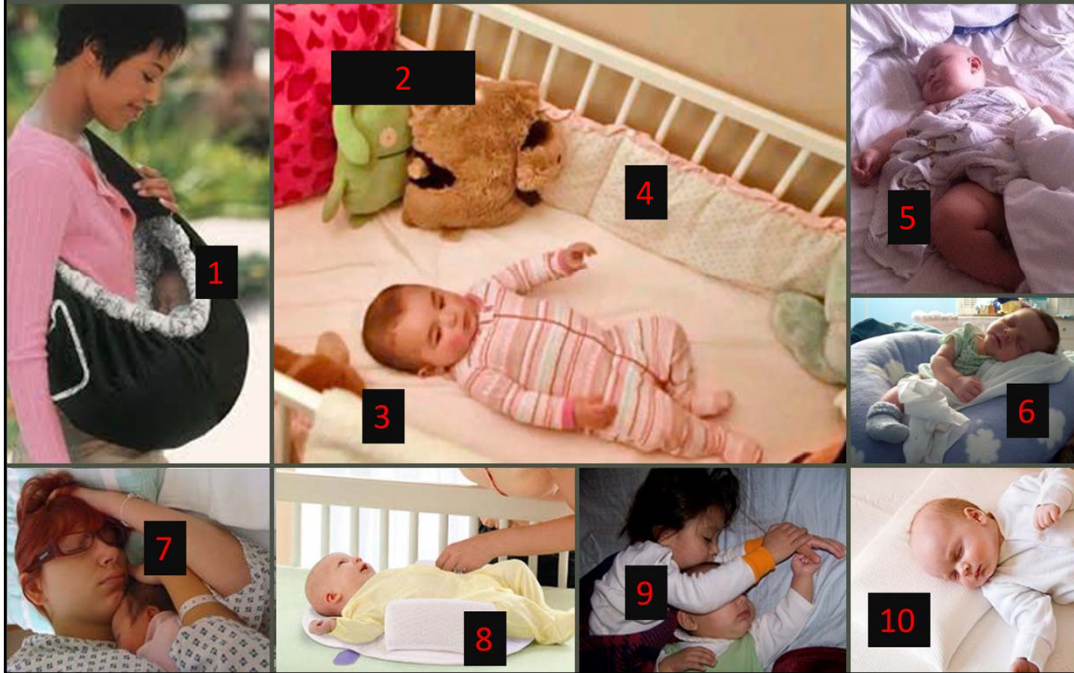
Safety checks

- You need to get very good at spotting potential hazards and assessing sleep safety.
- Remember that every check needs to consider:
 - **age** of baby and their mobility,
 - vulnerability of **baby**
 - as well as the sleep **setting**
- Breathing hazards can come in the form of pillows, toys, lying positions, dangling cords, other people, sleep aids etc

Activity

- Using what you have learnt, **spot 10 hazards** in these sleep environments and explain the potential risk.

Create safety



Each of the numbers identifies a potential sleep hazard.

1. The sling has placed the baby in a chin to chest position and may potentially narrow the airways. When choosing slings, ensure baby's face is always clear and oxygen can flow through the tubes easily
2. Toys in the cot can be a suffocation hazard
3. Loose blanket draped over side of cot- baby could pull blanket into cot and face may be covered
4. Loose bumper pads are a suffocation risk
5. Loose bedding- baby could get tangled leading to a covered face
6. Sleeping on a bean bag- suffocation risk
7. Baby sleeping on mother in face down position- baby's nose could become pinched, or arm across baby could compress chest
8. Wedge- if baby rolls to other side of wedge, and cannot roll back, they may become stuck in a face down position
9. Sharing bed with other children- toddlers arm could accidentally suffocate baby
10. Sleeping on pillow -forces the neck into a chin to chest position. Pillows are not needed for babies under 1 year of age

Activity:

Decide how to improve safety,

- assuming all babies were exposed to smoking in pregnancy
- and all are under 6 months.

Protection for the older baby



Protection for the older baby

- As babies become more mobile, they can, **by their own actions**, get into situations that can be life-threatening.
 - By 4 to 6 months babies can roll both ways and may not stay positioned on the back.
 - The sleep space needs to be **bare** of all soft, loose or unnecessary items, including toys.
 - Play at this stage is in practicing new movements.
- All safe sleep principles still apply to older babies, with special attention to either
 - firm tucking (as in the picture) or ...(see next slide)

Bare is best for cots



- Use of an infant sleep bag in a bare cot - no covers

Sleep bags remove the chance of getting caught in sheets and blankets when baby goes exploring in the cot.

Warmer or cooler temperatures are managed by varying, the number of layers of clothing the baby wears.

'That sleep' scenarios



Managing exceptions

- Too often, coroners' reports tell the tragic stories of how things were different 'that sleep'.
- Perhaps it was because a baby was
 - unwell, unsettled,
 - it was cold, the family had visitors, parents were exhausted,
 - there was a party, there was no bed for the baby or baby wouldn't sleep.
- Every sleep is a separate event and needs to be set up to be safe for the baby's age and vulnerability.

Is your baby in safe hands?



When there is drinking, drug use or partying, or you need a babysitter

Babies always need to be in safe hands

Deadly combination

Alcohol and drug use are factors in the deaths of some babies and children. It is dangerous for babies and children to be in the hands of anyone who cannot keep them safe.

Brains slow down

The brain slows down when people drink alcohol or take drugs. The affected person cannot think, move, or make decisions in the normal way.

What can happen

A drunk or stoned person may drop a baby, or fail to wake to a baby's cries for food, comfort or protection. They may be unaware of dangers in the sleeping environment that can cause a baby to accidentally suffocate during sleep.

Arrange a sober carer

Be sure your baby is always in the safe hands of a responsible and sober adult; someone who can respond to your baby's needs, and knows how to keep your baby safe when sleeping.

Every sleep, a safe sleep



In summary then ...

Protection must align with a baby's development - as they grow their needs change.

- We need to consider the baby's age, vulnerability and sleep location.
- These factors work together and cannot be treated in isolation.
- Being smokefree and being vigilant about 'sleep by sleep' safety checks for your baby, will provide the best protection
- We hope this presentation will enable you to identify and address any hazards in your baby's sleep environment so that the oxygen can always get through your baby's breathing tubes.
- We ask you share your learnings with friends and family so together we can make
 - every sleep a safe sleep for every New Zealand baby.

Thank you