



Evidence On Safe Bedsharing

Here is what science says about sleeping with your baby.

You will sleep more peacefully. Research shows a benefit of co-sleeping is infants virtually never startle during sleep and rarely cry during the night, compared to solo sleepers who startle repeatedly throughout the night and spend 4 times the number of minutes crying. Startling and crying releases adrenaline, which increases heart rate and blood pressure, interferes with restful sleep and leads to long term sleep anxiety. Stable physiology studies show that infants who sleep near to parents have more stable temperatures, regular heart rhythms, and fewer long pauses in breathing compared to babies who sleep alone. This means babies sleep physiologically safer.

Bedsharing decreases risk of sudden infant death syndrome. Worldwide research shows that the SIDS rate is lowest (and even unheard of) in countries where co-sleeping is the norm, rather than the exception (see SIDS: The Latest Research On How Sleeping With Your Baby Is Safe). Babies who sleep either in or next to their parents' bed have a fourfold decrease in the chance of SIDS. Co-sleeping babies actually spend more time sleeping on their back or side which decreases the risk of SIDS. Further research shows that the carbon dioxide exhaled by a parent actually works to stimulate baby's breathing.

It improves long term emotional health. Co-sleeping babies grow up with a higher self-esteem. Less anxiety, become independent sooner, are better behaved in school, and are more comfortable with affection. They also have less psychiatric problems.

It is safer than crib sleeping. The consumer product safety commission published data that described infant fatalities in adult beds. These same data, however, showed more than 3 times as many crib related infant fatalities compared to adult bed accidents. Another recent large study concluded that bed sharing did not increase the risk of SIDS, unless the parent was a smoker or abused alcohol.

Bedsharing will not be for everyone, try different arrangements to find what works best for you and your baby.

Safe Bedsharing Do's:

- Do have a firm mattress
- Do be drug and alcohol free
- Do place baby on their back
- Do have bed free of extra pillows and stuffed animals
- Do keep other children and pets off the bed
- Do remove blankets from baby