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October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month

In 2011, 161 infants less than one year of age died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in California, making it the second leading cause of death for infants between the ages of 28 days and one year. Despite years of research, the exact cause(s) of SIDS remain unknown.

SIDS is defined as the sudden and unexpected death of an infant who is less than one year of age and whose death cannot be explained even after a thorough case investigation including a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the infant's clinical history.

To help reduce SIDS, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Division and the California SIDS Advisory Council endorse the use of the 2011 American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations for educational activities in California. The expanded and scientifically supported 2011 AAP recommendations educate parents, caregivers, health care providers and the public on safe sleep and sleep environments for infants, which include placing babies to sleep on their backs, putting babies on a firm sleep surface, never smoking around the baby, not letting a baby overheat during sleep, and keeping soft objects out of a baby's sleep area. Prenatal care, breastfeeding, immunizations and regular well-child checks are also important recommendations. The messages contained in the following link have helped reduce the incidence of SIDS:

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/5/1030.full.pdf+html>.

The CDPH works with Local Health Jurisdictions to investigate sudden unexpected infant deaths to identify possible contributors to the cause(s) of death. California has earned a national reputation for excellence in SIDS education, risk reduction campaigns, research, and grief and bereavement support services.

During the month of October, CDPH promotes SIDS awareness through a variety of outreach events. These efforts are part of an ongoing campaign to increase public awareness about SIDS. Appropriate SIDS risk reduction resources can be accessed at CDPH's SIDS Program website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/SIDS/Pages/default.aspx>

This October, I commend the efforts made by CDPH, Local Health Jurisdictions and the SIDS Advisory Council members to promote infant safe sleep practices and reduce the risk of SIDS.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bellisley for Dr. Ron Chapman
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