



# *Facts About Sudden Infant Death Syndrome*

*SIDS, a word that stands for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, is the sudden unexplained death of a baby under one year of age.*

## **SIDS is...**

- the second leading cause of death for infants from one month to one year of age in California. Most of these infants die of SIDS during the first five months of life.
- responsible for taking the lives of nearly two hundred babies each year in the state.
- a cause of sudden death for infants which can happen to any family, regardless of race, ethnic origin, income or background.
- a recognized medical disorder. No one can predict which babies will die from SIDS.
- sudden and silent ~ the infant was seemingly healthy.
- seasonal. In California, more SIDS deaths occur in the months of October through March.
- a death often associated with sleep and with no signs of suffering or crying out.
- sometimes called “crib death” because babies who die of SIDS are often found in their crib.
- an infant death that leaves unanswered questions, causing intense grief for parents and families.

## **SIDS is not...**

- a new disease. References have been noted dating back to 950 B.C.
- caused by the diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT) vaccines or other immunizations.
- caused by vomiting and choking or by minor illnesses such as colds or infection.
- suffocation.
- caused by cribs.
- contagious or hereditary.
- child abuse or neglect.
- the cause of every unexpected infant death.
- preventable. Certain infant care practices such as placing a baby on his or her back to sleep on a firm surface, making sure a baby has a smoke-free environment and keeping a baby from being overheated can reduce the risk of SIDS. It is not possible to prevent a baby from dying of SIDS.

Adapted from *What is SIDS?* a publication produced by the National SIDS /Infant Death Resource Center.