

Facts About Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden death of an infant under one year of age which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history (Willinger et. al, 1991).

SIDS is...

- the leading cause of death of infants from one month to one year of age in the U.S. Most deaths occur between two and four months of age.
- the third leading cause of death for infants in California, taking the lives of nearly two hundred babies each year in the state.
- a cause of sudden infant death 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. More SIDS deaths occur in the winter months.
- 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.
- a diagnosis of exclusion.
- 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.
- preventable, but the risk can be reduced by placing a baby on his or her back to sleep on a firm surface, making sure a baby has a smoke-free environment, and by keeping a baby from being overheated.
- 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.

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



Distributed by the California SIDS Program under funding by the California Department of Health Services, Maternal and Child Health Branch

California SIDS Program • 3164 Gold Camp Drive, Suite 220 • Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6052
916-266-SIDS (7437) • 800-369-SIDS (7437) • FAX 916-266-7439
info@californiasids.com • www.californiasids.com