



# SOTERIA

## SAFE SLEEPING ADVICE

All children have the right to a safe sleeping environment

Issue 5

November 2018

A newsletter brought to you by Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice

Welcome to the **Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice Newsletter** for Education and Care Services

Soteria will keep you, and the families you care for, up to date with current media and safety issues, and how to improve your safe sleeping practices.

### This month's top story



#### **Never let babies sleep in a car capsule or car seat out of the car**

If an infant is brought into your service asleep in a car seat or capsule, is it safe to leave them sleeping propped up?

[Learn more](#) about the risks associated with this unsafe practice.



#### **How hot is too hot??**

Educators often tell us that parents are requesting their babies sleep in a room heated at a specific temperature ... but is there a right temperature.

[Find out below.](#)



#### **Is a box better?**

A recent trend has seen the sale of 'baby boxes' to Australian parents. These are being promoted as a cheaper alternative to cots but are they safe?

[Click here](#) to find out more ...



## [Would you pass a pop quiz on Safe Sleeping recommendations? Does your practice reflect your Safe Sleeping policy?](#)

A recent case interstate has highlighted the importance that these two critical components of your practice are aligned. [See below](#) for more...



### **A little bit about Soteria**

Named for the Greek goddess for safety and deliverer from harm, **Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice** provides child safe sleep advice based on scientific evidence-based information to health professionals, care-givers and the broader community. [Learn more here](#)



### **Safe Sleeping Education for Education & Care Services**

Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice runs on-site education sessions and half and full day workshops specifically aimed at the Education and Care Services. For more information, [click here](#)

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## **Never let babies sleep in a car capsule or car seat out of the car**

If an infant is brought into your service asleep in a car seat or capsule, is it safe to leave them sleeping propped up?

**No**

It is not safe to leave a sleeping infant propped up. On arrival at your service, it is best practice to remove the infant from the car seat or capsule – even if it means waking the infant – and place them in the cot on their back on a firm and flat mattress.

A car capsule or car seat is a travelling device, essential for infants' safe transport in cars to get them safely from A to B. These products should **not** be used as an alternative sleeping place. When you arrive at your destination, baby must be transferred out of car capsule and into another safe place – such as a cot or portable cot.

Experts strongly advise that car seats should not be used for infant sleep outside the car. Car seat use should be restricted to the minimum time required for travel.

Several research studies now confirm that, when a baby falls asleep in a semi-curved position when propped up, baby's head can fall forwards pushing the chin towards the chest. This leads to the airway becoming pinched and reducing airflow. Decreased oxygen levels can hamper healthy brain function and can, tragically, result in death from positional asphyxiation.

Try this exercise – tilt your own head forward placing your chin on your chest. Now try to breathe through your nose. It is difficult, isn't it? Babies sleep better on the back on a firm, FLAT surface which is not tilted.

Positional asphyxia can occur in any device that puts a baby in this position, such as bouncinettes, strollers, beanbags and rockers.

Many parents and carers of infants believe that placing an infant in a tilted or elevated position, whether it be in their cot or by using a product such as a beanbag or recliner or bouncinette, can reduce the symptoms of reflux, colic or wind; however, this practice can be dangerous and lead to fatal sleeping accidents.

**Remember: Safe Practice, Safe Place, Safe Product, Safe Policy for every sleep for every child**

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### How hot is too hot??

Educators often tell us that parents are requesting their babies sleep in a room heated at a specific temperature and with a certain amount of clothing, baby sleeping bag and bedding to settle. The educators have been worried that the babies were sweaty and may be too hot and asked, 'How much bedding should we place on baby when in a sleeping environment?' 'Can we say exactly how many blankets to use when baby is placed to bed?'

Answer? The simple answer is No – we cannot say exactly how many blankets and bedding to use when a baby is placed to sleep. Many factors need to be taken into consideration prior to deciding how much bedding or clothes should be used.

To prevent overheating, educators need to exercise their own judgement depending on:

- where you live (the climate whether it is summer or winter);
- the temperature in the room where baby is sleeping; and
- include in your assessment whether the infant has a cold or illness (hence babe may have a raised body temperature).

Red Nose recommends:

- Dress baby and use layers as you would dress or use layers yourself to be comfortable: neither too hot nor too cold;
- Research has shown that baby's risk of dying suddenly and unexpectedly is increased if baby is sleeping on the tummy and *that* risk is even further increased if baby is sleeping on the tummy under heavy bedding or if baby's head becomes covered by bedding in any position. Babies manage heat loss very efficiently when placed on the back to sleep with his/her head uncovered.  
**Remember:** Sleep baby on the back and keep baby's head uncovered during sleep to reduce baby's risk of sudden unexpected death;
- Make up baby's bed so baby sleeps at the bottom of the cot and the blankets can only reach as far as baby's chest, ensuring baby cannot move down during sleep and get his/her head covered by bedding;
- Consider using a safe baby sleeping bag;
- Dress baby for sleep and add/remove lightweight blankets to ensure baby's chest feels comfortably warm to the touch;
- Remove hats or bonnets from baby's head as soon as baby is indoors

Red Nose does not recommend a specific room temperature for healthy babies and, in many homes and services, it would be difficult to attain a specific temperature for the room if there is no control heating or cooling system available.

To date, there is no evidence to show that maintaining a specific room temperature prevents sudden infant death and there is no evidence to show that thermal factors are implicated in SIDS as long as:

- The baby is placed to sleep on the back
- The baby is dressed appropriately for the room temperature (not over or under dressed)
- The baby's head and face remain uncovered

### **Best practice**

Babies control their temperature predominantly through the face. Sleeping baby on the back with the head and face uncovered is the best way to protect baby from overheating.

- It is not necessary to monitor the room temperature or to leave the heating or cooling on all night or day if the baby is dressed appropriately for the room temperature
- Dress baby as you would dress yourself – comfortably warm, neither hot or cold
- A good way to check baby's temperature is to feel baby's chest, which should feel warm (don't worry if baby's hands and feet feel cool, this is normal).  
If baby is sweating or has a red face, remove some bedding or clothing. This may be necessary if baby is unwell, in which case you should seek medical attention
- Ensure that baby's head and face cannot become covered – remove bedding such as duvets, pillows, bumpers, lamb's wool, soft toys etc
- A good way to avoid face covering is to use a baby sleeping bag (one with fitted neck, armholes or sleeves and no hood)
- If using bedclothes rather than a sleeping bag, it is the best to use layers of lightweight blankets that can be added or removed easily, according to the room temperature, and which can be tucked underneath the mattress.
- Remove baby's head coverings such as a hat as soon as you go indoors or enter a warm car, bus or train, even if it means waking the baby
- Never use electric blankets, wheat bags or hot water bottles for babies

**Remember: Safe Practice, Safe Place, Safe Product, Safe Policy for every sleep for every child**

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### **Is a box better?**

A recent trend has seen the sale of 'baby boxes' to Australian parents. These are being promoted as a cheaper alternative to cots but are they safe?

Promoters often cite that these are provided to new parents in European countries like Finland or parts of the UK and they come with items such as clothes and blankets.

However, experts overseas and in Australia question the claims babies are safer in these boxes than the traditional cot, bassinet or basket and argue that there is no evidence that the boxes are a safe place in which to sleep baby. In addition to being difficult for parents to supervise their child sleeping, there are other factors which are of concern, particularly in climates different to Europe.

Many places in Australia are humid and there is little, if any, research into the durability and resistance to moisture being measured. Also of concern, boxes have the potential of being flammable, especially if not laminated, and when placed on the floor, leave the infant

exposed to pets and being fallen on or tripped over as well as low level draughts. Some boxes also come with lids, which adds another layer of safety issues.

There has also been no clear evidence that SIDS has been reduced in countries where these are used and according to renowned British SIDS researcher, Prof. Peter Blair, more studies are needed to "better understand how families use the cardboard baby box and its safety implications".

**For more information:** <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-45889226> or read Prof. Blair's letter to the *British Medical Journal* here [www.bmj.com/content/363/bmj.k4243](http://www.bmj.com/content/363/bmj.k4243).

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**Would you pass a pop quiz on Safe Sleeping recommendations? Does your practice reflect your Safe Sleeping policy?**

With the recent introduction of the Education and Care Services National Regulation 168 in October 2017, it is imperative [that educators are well informed about evidence-based safe sleeping recommendations](#) and [each centre has a current policy around sleep and rest for children](#).

A recent case interstate has highlighted the importance that these two critical components of your practice are aligned. Although the Centre had a Safe Sleeping policy, their practice did not reflect this as they were not following the Red Nose Safe Sleeping recommendations as mandated in the regulations. As a result, they are now having to take urgent remedial steps to ensure their Centre meets the standards required to retain their accreditation.

Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice runs education specifically aimed at the Education and Care Services, both half and full day workshops and on-site sessions.

These workshops cover Safe Sleeping recommendations as well as policy development. The first offers an in-depth look not only into the Safe Sleeping recommendations themselves, but the scientific evidence on which they are based and provide a deeper understanding of the "why" behind the "what". The second workshop focusses on the purpose behind having a well-constructed policy and gives participants insights into whether your policy provides clear and concise guidelines to your staff, parents and other stakeholders, as well as more practical aspects of policy development.

On-site Safe Sleeping education sessions provide centres with a cost-effective training option for your staff. These sessions review your staff's current level of Safe Sleeping knowledge and give staff a thorough grasp of the fundamental Safe Sleeping recommendations and the importance of these in providing best practice care to the children in your service.

Both the workshops and education sessions use pre and post evaluations to gauge participants' comprehension with reports available to your centre.

[Click here](#) to learn more or call Jill Green on 0417 332009

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## Education Sessions

With the recent introduction of the Education and Care Services National Regulation 168 in October 2017, it is imperative that educators are well informed about evidence-based safe sleeping recommendations and each centre has a current policy around sleep and rest for children.

Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice runs on-site education sessions and half and full day workshops specifically aimed at the Education and Care Services.

We have a workshop scheduled for November in Burwood and others throughout 2019 – dates to be confirmed.

Our professional development sessions provide early childhood education and care services with clear evidence-based information and guidelines on how to create a safe sleeping environment and deliver safe sleeping practices for all infants and young children.

Topics include:

- the Triple Risk Theory;
- care of a sick or unsettled infant;
- why the back position is the safest position;
- what to do when an infant starts to roll;
- swaddling/wrapping;
- prevention of plagiocephaly (flat head);
- effective supervision;
- when to move a young child from a cot to a bed or mattress; and
- dealing with conflict/handling parents' concerns.

To discuss how Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice can meet your Centre's specific needs, email [education@soteriasafesleepingadvice.com.au](mailto:education@soteriasafesleepingadvice.com.au) or call Jill Green on 0417 332009

## Workshops

### WORKSHOP 1

**“Safe Sleeping for Infants and Young Children”** has been designed specifically to:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of employing the safe sleeping principles in their own practice
- ensure all those who care for infants and young children are aware of the best practice guidelines to reduce the risk of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI) including SIDS and sleeping accidents  
and
- to support a consistent and national approach and to create a safe sleeping environment for all infants and young children

### WORKSHOP 2\*

**“From Regulation to Our Practice- developing a healthy Safe Sleeping policy and implementing best practice”\*** has been designed specifically to:

- develop confidence in planning and developing a safe sleeping policy document and

tools for practice

- build your capacity to implement and deliver effective safe sleep policy and tools into your practice
- explore challenges and opportunities and the ways in which these influence legal and ethical responsibilities, including reporting and documentation requirements

## Soteria Safe Sleeping Advice

### Our Vision and Mission

Our vision for ***all children to have the right to a safe sleeping environment*** will be achieved through building knowledge and understanding of safe sleeping practices for all caregivers to protect children from harm. Our mission is to support professionals and their practice, particularly in the context of their knowledge and understanding of Safe Sleeping practices.

### Our guiding principles

Our approach to undertaking this work rests on the following understandings:

- The content will be based on current evidence based research
- The content will align with current National Standards, policy and best practice

### Our credentials

Our principals possess a very strong background in developing safe sleeping guidelines based on scientific evidence-based information, in collaboration with researchers and other key players in this field. These guidelines form the basis for national standards for education and practice as well as informing community health campaigns.

Between them, they have over thirty years of safe sleeping knowledge garnered through their work with Red Nose, renowned for its successful Safe Sleeping health promotion campaign. With a history in nursing to underpin this knowledge, they have been instrumental in developing policy which is embedded into maternal child health practice and other national standards.

They are influential in developing resources for professionals and families, advocating for changes in policy and practice, in both the safe sleeping and bereavement support spheres.

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