

Google it?: Internet searches often provide inaccurate information about infant sleep safety

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In 2010, 59% of the U.S. population used internet searches for health information, and parents searching for information regarding their children were among the top users. In 2011, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) published recommendations for infant sleep safety to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), suffocation, strangulation, and other accidental sleep-related deaths. However, according to a study scheduled for publication in The Journal of Pediatrics, Google internet searches related to infant sleep safety often do not reflect AAP recommendations.

Seventy-two percent of adults thought that they could believe most or all of the health [information](#) on the internet, and 70% of adults said that information that they found on the internet impacted their health or their actions pertaining to their health or the health of their children.

According to Rachel Y. Moon, MD, pediatrician and SIDS researcher at Children's National Medical Center, Washington, DC, "It is important for [health care providers](#) to realize the extent to which parents may turn to the internet for information about [infant sleep](#) safety and then act on that advice, regardless of the reliability of the source."

Dr. Moon and colleagues from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, Children's National Medical Center, and George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences checked the accuracy of information on infant sleep safety available on the

internet, using [Google](#), the top search engine in the U.S. Thirteen key phrases were created to reflect specific AAP recommendations for infant sleep safety, and the first 100 search engine websites were analyzed for each phrase (1300 websites total).

Of 1300 [website](#) results, 43.5% provided accurate information, 28.1% provided inaccurate information, and 28.4% provided information that was not relevant to infant sleep safety. When the websites that were not relevant were excluded, 60.8% of the websites provided accurate information. The key search phrases with the highest percentage of accurate information were "infant cigarette smoking," "infant sleep position," and "infant sleep surface"; those with the highest percentage of inaccurate information were "pacifier infant," "infant home monitor," and "infant co-sleeping."

The most common types of websites resulting from the key search phrases were company/interest groups, retail product reviews, and educational websites. Government and organizational websites had the highest percentage of accurate information (80.1% and 72.5%, respectively). Blogs, retail product reviews, and individuals' websites had the highest percentage of inaccurate information regarding infant sleep safety (30.9%, 36.2%, and 45.5%, respectively). News websites were accurate only one-half of the time.

More information: "Safe Infant Sleep Recommendations on the Internet: Let's Google It" by Matthew Chung, BSc, Rosalind P. Oden, Brandi L. Joyner, MSA, Alexandra Sims, BA, Rachel Y. Moon, MD, appears in *The Journal of Pediatrics*, [DOI 10.1016/j.jpeds.2012.06.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpeds.2012.06.004)

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