

Baby sitters, relatives often unaware of SIDS risk

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(HealthDay)—A baby's risk of death from being placed in an unsafe

sleeping position or location is higher when they're under the care of a baby sitter, relative or friend, a new study found.

The finding shows the need for parents to educate anyone who cares for their [infants](#) about safe sleep practices and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). In the United States SIDS is the leading cause of [death](#) among [babies](#) between 1 month and 1 year of age, the researchers said.

They examined more than 10,000 infant deaths and found that 1,375 of them occurred when a parent was not present. In many of those cases, the babies had been placed in unsafe sleep positions, such as on their stomachs, or in unsafe locations, such as an adult bed or a couch.

The analysis of the deaths revealed that while nearly 73 percent of licensed child care providers had followed recommendations to place babies in a crib or bassinet, the rate was 49 percent among baby sitters, 29 percent among relatives, and 27 percent among friends.

While 54 percent of child care providers had placed infants in the recommended supine position (on their back), the rate was 39 percent among friends, 38 percent among relatives, and 38 percent among baby sitters.

Infants under the care of baby sitters, relatives and friends were also more likely be placed in a sleep setting with potentially dangerous objects, such as toys, blankets and sleep bumpers, according to the study published April 2 in the *Journal of Pediatrics*.

"If someone else—a baby sitter, relative or [friend](#)—is taking care of your baby, please make sure that they know to place your baby on the back in a crib and without any bedding," said study author Dr. Rachel Moon, from the University of Virginia School of Medicine.

"You can't make assumptions that the person with whom your baby is staying will know what is safest," she said in a university news release.

Added another study author, Dr. Jeffrey Colvin, of Children's Mercy Kansas City: "A lot of relatives and friends may not be aware that babies are safest on their backs. They may have raised children before we knew that this was safest."

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics offers a [guide to safe sleep](#) for babies.

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