

Study finds most sudden unexplained infant deaths occur on shared surfaces

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Almost 60 percent of sudden unexpected infant deaths (SUID) occur on shared sleep surfaces, according to a [study](#) published online Feb. 20 in *Pediatrics*.

Alexa B. Erck Lambert, M.P.H., from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, and colleagues identified SUID among residents of 23 U.S. jurisdictions who died from 2011 to 2020. The frequencies and percentages of demographic, sleep environment, and other characteristics were examined by sleep surface sharing status.

The researchers found that 59.5 percent of the 7,595 SUID cases were sharing a sleep surface when they died. Sharing infants were more often aged 0 to 3 months, non-Hispanic Black, publicly insured, found supine, and found in an adult bed or chair/couch. These [infants](#) also had a higher number of unsafe sleep factors, were more often exposed to [maternal smoking](#) prenatally, were unsupervised by a parent at the time of death, or had a supervisor who was impaired by drugs or alcohol.

Multiple unsafe sleep factors were present for at least 76 percent of all SUID. Of the surface-sharing SUID, 68.2, 75.9, and 51.6 percent were sharing with adults only, in an adult bed, and with one other person, respectively.

"Our findings support comprehensive safe sleep counseling for every family at every encounter beyond just asking where an infant is sleeping," the authors write.

More information: Alexa B. Erck Lambert et al, Characteristics of Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths on Shared and Nonshared Sleep Surfaces, *Pediatrics* (2024). [DOI: 10.1542/peds.2023-061984](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2023-061984)

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