

# Many parents don't follow safe infant sleep practices

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Each year, 4,000 babies die unexpectedly during sleep time from sudden infant death syndrome, accidental suffocation or unknown causes. To keep infants safe, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises caregivers to put babies to sleep on their backs and avoid sharing a bed, among other practices.

Many families, however, are not following this advice, according to a study to be presented Saturday, May 3, at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Researchers surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,030 mothers recruited from 32 hospitals across the country. Sixty-one percent of the mothers were white, 13 percent were black and 25 percent Hispanic. Fifty-seven percent were married. Eight percent were 14-19 years old; 24 percent were 20-24 years; 29 percent were 25-29 years; and 36 percent were age 30 or older.

When infants were 2-6 months of age, mothers completed an online or telephone survey asking about infant care practices, including bed sharing and infant sleeping position.

Results showed families do not always follow recommendations to reduce the risk of sleep-related [infant death](#). In addition, high-risk sleeping behaviors, such as [bed sharing](#) and putting infants on their stomachs to sleep, are more common among black and Hispanic families.

Overall, 18.5 percent of mothers reported sharing a bed with their infant. The rate was highest among Hispanics (28 percent) followed by blacks (18.4 percent) and whites (13.7 percent).

About 10 percent of all [mothers](#) routinely put their babies to sleep on their stomachs. The rate was highest among blacks (21.6 percent) followed by whites (10.4 percent) and Hispanics (7.1 percent).

"There appears to be more that can be done to provide safe environments for infants while they sleep," said lead author Eve R. Colson, MD, MHPE, FAAP, professor of pediatrics, Yale University School of Medicine.

**More information:** Dr. Colson will present "Reports of Infant Sleep Behaviors from a National Sample of Mothers: the Study of Attitudes and Factors Affecting Infant Care (SAFE)" from 3:30-3:45 p.m. Saturday, May 3. To view the study abstract, go to [www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...hp?nu=PAS14L1\\_1690.4](http://www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...hp?nu=PAS14L1_1690.4)

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