

Many U.S. Parents Don't Follow Safe Sleep Guidelines

Some recent infant sleep statistics are keeping birthing center professionals awake at night. [A new government study](#) has found that many American parents are not following recommended guidelines on how to safely put their babies to sleep.

The study focused on four [safe sleep practices](#): placing a baby on his back to sleep, providing the baby a separate approved sleep surface, room sharing with an infant without bed sharing, and soft objects or loose bedding being removed from the sleep surface.

While the study found that most babies are being placed on their backs to sleep (78%), a much smaller percentage of parents are following some other recommendations.

Less than 32% reported they put their babies to sleep on "approved" surfaces, such as a crib, bassinet or Pack 'n Play. Also, fewer than half of surveyed parents (just 42%) kept their baby's sleep area free of blankets, pillows and toys.

Joey Evans, a registered nurse at the OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Birthing Center in Bloomington, says that many people have pre-determined thoughts on what is best for baby, based on opinions from the past.

"Even though patients will say, 'we didn't do this back then and we turned out fine,' there are now statistics and research out there that show this is the best practice," explained Evans. "Best practice is to make sure they have their own sleeping environment, to make sure there's nothing extra inside that environment, and that they are sleeping on their backs."

Another part of the problem may be that parents aren't aware of those guidelines.

OSF St. Joseph's Birthing Center was recently recognized by the National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program as a "Gold Safe Sleep Champion" for their commitment to best practices for safe infant sleep.

Evans says a major part of that success is patient education.

"We start it off as soon as they're admitted, and then throughout their stay, if they are falling asleep in their bed, we'll reeducate them, or if they're keeping extra blankets on the baby we'll educate them again. We try to continuously do it throughout their stay from the very get-go," said Evans.

The National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program was created by Cribs for Kids®, which is dedicated to preventing infant sleep-related deaths resulting from accidental suffocation. As a Nationally Certified Safe Sleep Hospital, OSF St. Joseph is recognized for following the safe sleep guidelines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and providing training programs for healthcare team members, and family caregivers.

For more information about the Birthing Center at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph, or to schedule a tour, click [here](#) or call (309) 665-4703.