



Safe Sleep Briefing

Sleep positioners, pods and nests

Who is the briefing for?

Midwives, Health Visitors, Family Health Workers, Early Help Workers, Early Years Practitioners
– anyone supporting families with children under the age of 1.

What is the purpose of the briefing?

To update practitioners on the safe sleep advice regarding baby sleep positioners, nests and pods that their families might be using.

Who has put together this briefing?

The briefing has been issued by the Lincolnshire Avoidable Injuries Group. The aim of the group is to reduce the risk of babies dying of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and other fatal sleep accidents.

What are the current NHS safer sleep recommendations?

Do:

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep;
- Place your baby in a the 'feet to foot' position (with their feet touching the end of the cot, Moses basket or pram);
- Keep your baby's head uncovered. The blanket should be no higher than their shoulders;
- Use a firm, flat, waterproof mattress in good condition;
- Put your baby to sleep in a cot or Moses basket in the same room as you for the first six months;
- Keep soft toys and loose beddings out the cot or crib;
- Keep your baby smoke free during pregnancy and after birth;
- Breastfeed your baby if you can.

Do Not:

- Smoke during pregnancy or let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby – both before and after birth;
- Sleep on a bed, sofa or armchair with your baby;
- Share a bed with your baby if you or your partner smoke or take drugs, or if you've been drinking alcohol;
- Let your baby get too hot or too cold – a room temperature of 16C to 20C, with light bedding or a lightweight baby sleeping bag, will provide a comfortable sleeping environment for your baby.

Parents/Carers should follow the advice for all naps, not just for night time sleep.



What are sleep positioners, pods and nests?

A sleep positioner is a mat with raised supports or pillows attached to each side. They are designed to keep babies in specific positions. Pods or nests are softer types of sleep surface with raised or cushioned areas.



What does the research say?

Research suggests that parents use sleep positioners, pods and nests to prevent SIDS, reflux, rolling and plagiocephaly (flat head). Some parents are concerned that lying supine, the baby is at increased risk of choking or aspiration. Also some feel the firm mattress is too hard to be comfortable. There is no evidence these devices reduce the risk of SIDS.

The US based study '*Suffocation deaths associated with use of infant sleep positions in US 1997-2011*', reviewed 13 cases of deaths that were associated with the use of infant sleeping positioners. In the US there are 4000 deaths per year from suffocation or SIDS from unknown causes. The US Food and Drug Administration and the UK Health Service Executive have advised against the use of sleep positioners due to them being linked to deaths in the US.

Mattresses have to comply with specific BSI standards; however, sleeping positioners do not have to comply with these same standards.

What do authorities on safe sleep say about positioners, pods and nests?

The Lullaby Trust and Public Health England do not recommend the use of sleep positioners, pods or nests. A recent survey of new and expectant parents commissioned by The Lullaby Trust showed **41%** of parents have bought or are planning to buy a baby sleep nest or pod. These items go against the advice that babies should sleep on a firm, entirely flat waterproof surface.

What advice should be given to parents?

If practitioners observe families using sleep positioners, pods or nests with their baby they should discuss the risks and advise parents to follow the current safe sleeping advice (as above).

All the evidence suggests that the safest sleeping environment for babies is: on their back, on a firm, flat and waterproof mattress, in a cot or Moses basket clear of loose or soft objects.

Further information

The Lullaby Trust website: <https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/sleeping-products/>

NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/reducing-risk-cot-death/>