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Hot Topic

To Co-sleep or Not to Co-sleep, That is the Question!



What is co-sleeping?

It can mean different things to different families. Some co-sleeping families all sleep together in a “family bed.” Others will have the baby in their room but in a separate crib or bassinet. Many cultures around the world co-sleep. In a study of cultures around the world researchers found that more than two thirds of mothers slept with their babies. The number of families who co-sleep was even higher when including mothers who sleep in the same room as their babies (Barry & Paxton, 1971 and Burton & Whiting, 1961 as cited in Shonkoff & Philips 2000). Some families in Early Head Start may co-sleep with their young children. Many families don't realize they are co-sleeping if they bring the baby into their bed at some point in the night. The best sleeping arrangement is the one that works for everyone in the family!

The choices a family makes about how they sleep can come from many places. New parents get messages from family members, doctors and books. An EHS Teacher or Home Visitor can give parents the information they need to have a safe night's sleep.

Good Tips for a Safe Night's Sleep:

- All babies need to be put on their backs to sleep
- Use a firm mattress
- Only use one light blanket, never use heavy blankets or pillows.
- Do not put toys or stuffed animals in with the baby

Co-sleepers do all of the above and:

- Make sure there is no space between the mattress and headboard.
- Make sure the adult bed is safe for infants – no fluffy comforters, pillows, and use a firm mattress.
- The edge of the bed should be protected with a tightly fitting bed rail.
- Never co-sleep when either parent is under the influence of alcohol or drugs (even prescription medications). Overly tired parents should not share a bed with a baby.
- Older children should not be in the same bed with an infant.

Have more questions? Look for “Sleep” under key topics on the ZERO TO THREE website.