

Keeping Babies Safe

A Guide for Families



Introduction

This guide is here to help families with simple, practical tips to keep babies safe during their first year.

This includes information on:

- Safer sleep
- Crying
- Feeding
- Baby slings
- Safe baby bath time
- Scald and Burns
- Preventing falls in babies
- Keeping babies safe around pets
- Sources of support in Stockport

Share the information in this guide with any family members or friends who might help care for your baby.



Safer Sleep

Almost 200 babies and young children in the UK die every year from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Research shows that some risks are more common in babies who die from SIDS. The good news is, there are simple steps you can take to help lower the risk.



The safest sleeping position for your baby is on their back with their feet at the bottom of the bed. Do not put your baby on their front or side to sleep.

Keep your baby's sleep surface flat. Do not incline, tilt or prop the mattress, cot or baby and use a clean waterproof mattress.



A room temperature of 16-20°C with light bedding or a lightweight, well-fitting baby sleep bag is comfortable and safe for sleeping babies.

Parents and carers should try not to smoke during pregnancy and after your baby is born. Don't let people smoke near your baby and keep your home, car, and other places your baby spends time, smoke free.



Babies shouldn't sleep in car seats for long periods. Use them for transport only, not as an alternative to cots or highchairs. If you are going on a long drive, take breaks every 2 hours to remove your baby from the seat, let them stretch, and reposition. For very young newborns, take a break every 30 minutes.

For more information on SIDS, visit the [NHS website](#). If you want to read more on smoking and sleep, visit [The Lullaby Trust website](#). For information on choosing the right car seat and car seat safety, visit [The Lullaby Trust](#), [The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#) and the [NHS websites](#).

Safer Sleep



The safest place for your baby to sleep is in a clear cot. That means removing anything that isn't essential like toys or bumpers. Babies need just two items in their cot:

1. A firm, flat, waterproof mattress.
2. Lightweight bedding.

Co-sleeping with your baby is very dangerous if you or anyone in the bed:



- Has recently drunk alcohol. When you drink alcohol, think about who's in charge of your baby to make sure they are safe when they are sleeping.
- Has taken any drugs or medication that make you feel sleepy.
- Smokes.
- If your baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or weighed under 2.5kg or 5½ lbs when they were born.



Breastfeeding lowers the risk of SIDS. If you want to breastfeed and are struggling, talk to your Midwife, Health Visitor or the Infant Feeding Team.

All telephone numbers are in the local support section at the end of this guide.

If you want more information on co-sleeping, speak to your Midwife or Health Visitor.

Visit The Lullaby Trust website for more information on:
[Keeping cots clear.](#)
[Alcohol and sleep.](#)
[Premature babies and safe sleep.](#)

Safer Sleep

The number of baby sleeping products available can be confusing. When looking for products, here's some things to check.

Safe products should clearly display:

- Relevant safety certifications (CE, UKCA markings).
- Age-appropriate guidelines.
- Comprehensive safety instructions.
- Clear manufacturer contact information.

Check the mattress is:

- Firm. Your baby's head should not sink in by more than a few millimetres.
- Entirely flat with no raised or cushioned areas.
- Has a waterproof cover.

These items are not recommended:

- Soft sided pods or nests.
- Pillows, duvets or thick heavy bedding.
- Cot bumpers.
- Bouncy chairs.
- Baby hammocks.
- Bean bags.
- Baby swings.
- Sleep positioners.



To learn more about choosing safe baby sleeping products, visit [The Lullaby Trust website](#).

Baby Crying

Babies cry for lots of reasons. It's how they let you know they need something, like a cuddle, a feed, or a nappy change. Their brains aren't developed enough yet to calm themselves or understand what's going on.

It's normal for babies to cry more often from around two weeks old. Crying usually increases over the next few weeks and peaks at around 6 to 8 weeks. Most babies start to cry less from then on.

After about 5 months, experts say that crying becomes more 'purposeful'. That means after this age, your baby is more likely to be crying for a reason.

Crying can be upsetting for parents and carers — and that's natural. It's designed to get your attention quickly. The most important thing to remember is that crying is normal, and it will get better.

Sometimes, babies cry for no clear reason, and nothing seems to settle them. This can be hard, but it doesn't harm your baby and it will pass.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, it's okay to take a short break or ask your partner to step in and help—as long as your baby is somewhere safe.

It's never okay to shake a baby. Shaking can cause serious brain injuries, which can lead to death or long-term problems.



ICON helps parents and carers understand that it's normal for babies to cry. They also share ways to comfort your baby. Click on the image to visit the [ICON website](#).

For information on soothing a crying baby, visit the [NHS website](#).

Feeding

Prop feeding is dangerous and should never be done.

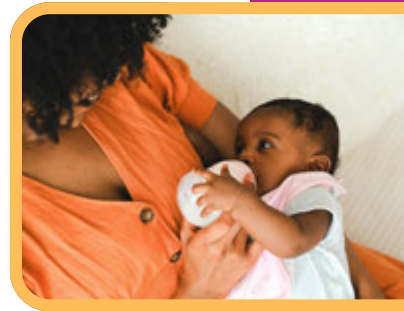
Leaving a baby with a bottle propped in their mouth puts them at serious risk of choking or suffocation.

Prop feeding (or bottle propping) is when a baby is left with a bottle held in place before they can hold it themselves. People sometimes use cushions, blankets, or soft toys to support the bottle—whether the baby is in a car seat, bouncer, crib, or on a sofa.

This is unsafe because:

- Babies can't control the flow of milk, which may keep coming even after they stop sucking.
- They may inhale milk instead of swallowing, leading to silent choking.
- Soft items used to hold the bottle can slip and cover the baby's face, blocking their breathing.

Always hold your baby during feeds—it's safer and supports bonding too.



For more information on the dangers of prop feeding, visit the [Health for Under 5's website](#). The [NHS website](#) has information on safe bottle feeding.

Feeding

Many parents worry about their baby choking when they start on solid food. But what's the difference between choking and gagging?

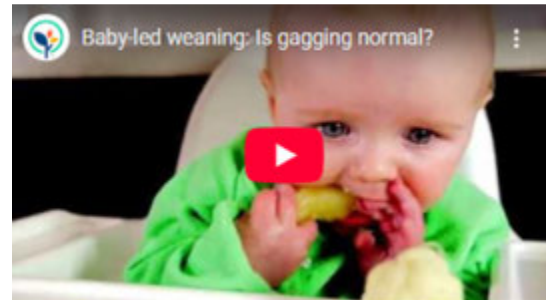
Gagging is a normal reflex as babies learn to chew and swallow solids. It's usually loud, with coughing or retching and may cause redness in the face, though this can be harder to spot on brown or black skin. Stay calm during gagging, it helps babies learn to manage food safely.

Choking is dangerous and typically silent. A baby may struggle to breathe and show signs of cyanosis (blue skin). On lighter skin, this may appear on the face or lips; on darker skin, check the gums, inside lips, or fingernails.

If choking occurs:

- Shout for help.
- Remove the baby from the highchair.
- Lay the baby face down along your forearm and thigh.
- Support their head and neck.
- Give 5 sharp back blows between the shoulder blades.

Watch this BabyCentre video on YouTube to see what gagging sounds and looks like.



For step by step guides on what to do if you think your baby is choking, visit the [St John's Ambulance](#) and the [NHS](#) websites. [Millie's Trust](#) offers local in person first aid courses.

Baby Slings

Baby slings are a popular way for parents to keep their baby close and build a strong bond. But it's important to use them safely.

A sling's fabric can press against a baby's nose or mouth, making it hard for them to breathe.

Young babies don't have strong neck muscles, so their heads can fall forward, pressing their chin to their chest. This can block their airway.

To keep your baby safe:

- Make sure their chin is off their chest.
- Their face should always be visible and clear of fabric.
- Always check your baby's position and breathing when using a sling.

When you're wearing a sling or carrier, don't forget the T.I.C.K.S acronym by the UK Sling Consortium. Click on the image to enlarge it.

If you would like to borrow and test a sling, visit the [Stockport sling library](#) or [The Parenting Collective](#). For more information on sling safety, visit [The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents website](#).



The T.I.C.K.S. Rule for Safe Babywearing

Keep your baby close and keep your baby safe.

When you're wearing a sling or carrier, don't forget the T.I.C.K.S.



- ✓ TIGHT
- ✓ IN VIEW AT ALL TIMES
- ✓ CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS
- ✓ KEEP CHIN OFF THE CHEST
- ✓ SUPPORTED BACK



TIGHT – slings and carriers should be tight enough to hug your baby close to you as this will be most comfortable for you both. Any slack/loose fabric will allow your baby to slump down in the carrier which can hinder their breathing and pull on your back.



IN VIEW AT ALL TIMES – you should always be able to see your baby's face by simply glancing down. The fabric of a sling or carrier should not close around them so you have to open it to check on them. In a cradle position your baby should face upwards not be turned in towards your body.



CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS – your baby's head should be as close to your chin as is comfortable. By tipping your head forward you should be able to kiss your baby on the head or forehead.



KEEP CHIN OFF THE CHEST – a baby should never be curled so their chin is forced onto their chest as this can restrict their breathing. Ensure there is always a space of at least a finger width under your baby's chin.



SUPPORTED BACK – in an upright carry a baby should be held comfortably close to the wearer so their back is supported in its natural position and their tummy and chest are against you. If a sling is too loose they can slump which can partially close their airway. (This can be tested by placing a hand on your baby's back and pressing gently – they should not uncurl or move close to you.) A baby in a cradle carry in a pouch or ring sling should be positioned carefully with their bottom in the deepest part so the sling does not fold them in half pressing their chin to their chest.

Safe Baby Bath Time



Babies and toddlers can drown in just a few centimetres of water. This all happens silently, with no noise or struggle to let you know they're in danger.

Babies can't sense risk, and if their face goes into water, they may not be able to lift it out. This can lead to death or serious brain injury.

Their skin is very delicate, 15 times thinner than an adults, so burns can happen easily and be more severe.



For a safe bath time:

- Get everything you need ready before bath time.
- Stay with your baby all the time they're in the bath.
- Don't leave your baby alone, even for a moment. Keep them in arm's reach.
- Remember bath seats can topple over, or your baby can slip out.
- Don't rely on a toddler to keep an eye on your baby. They're too young to understand the danger.
- Always run cold water before hot.
- Test the temperature with your elbow.



For more information on a safe bath time, visit [The Child Accident Prevention Trust](#) and the [NHS websites](#).

Burns and Scalds

Young children are more at risk of burns and scalds because:

- Their small size means contact with something hot can cover a larger area of their skin.
- Their skin is much thinner than an adult's, so burns cause more serious injury.
- Babies and toddlers are curious and still developing motor skills, so they may grab anything nearby – whether it's a toy or something hot.
- Their reflexes aren't fully developed, so they don't instinctively pull away from heat.
- They're still learning and don't always remember warnings or understand the consequences.

Top tips to prevent burns:

- Supervise young children at all times.
- Look for safe zones in your house where you know your child can't reach your hot drink, iron or candles.
- Put your hair styling products in a heat-proof pouch or on a high shelf to cool.
- When running a bath, put cold water in first and top up with hot.
- Push your kettle to the back of the worktop and use the back rings of your cooker first.
- Use fire guards and move cots away from radiators to prevent climbing.
- Keep babies under the age of 6 months out of direct sunlight and cover exposed parts of your child's skin with sunscreen from the age of 6 months.



Visit the [Child Accident Prevention Trust](#) and the [NHS](#) websites for more tips on preventing burns in different areas of your home and for first aid following a burn.

Preventing Falls in Babies

Babies grow and change quickly—one day they're still, the next they're rolling, crawling, or climbing. This can catch parents off guard, and they may fall off beds or changing tables. Babies' heads are heavy compared to their bodies, so when they fall, their heads often hit the ground first.

Most falls aren't serious, but some can cause significant harm.

Here are some things you can do to stop your baby being injured:

- Change nappies on the floor using a mat to avoid falls.
- Never leave your baby alone on a bed, sofa, or changing table—they could roll off.
- Keep baby seats and bouncers on the floor, not on tables or counters.
- Hold the handrail on stairs when carrying your baby and keep stairs clear of toys or other tripping hazards.
- Use a safe baby walker that meets British Standard BS EN 1273:2005. Older walkers may tip over more easily.
- Always use a 5-point harness in highchairs and prams to secure your baby.
- Remove large toys from the cot once your baby can stand, to prevent them from climbing out.



For more information on preventing falls as your baby grows, visit [The Child Accident Prevention Trust](#) and the [NHS](#) websites.

Keeping babies Safe around Pets

A new baby can be a big change for your pet. They might lose access to rooms or furniture, and some pets find change hard.

Help your pet adjust by slowly introducing baby items and new routines. Use treats or rewards they enjoy.

Let your pet see and smell the baby but always supervise. Never leave your baby alone with a pet, even if they haven't shown signs of aggression previously.

Make sure your pet still gets exercise, food, and attention.

If you're worried, talk to your Midwife or Health Visitor.



For more information, visit [The Child Accident Prevention Trust](#), the [NHS](#) and the [Dogs Trust](#) websites.

Sources of Support in Stockport



[Midwives](#). Maternity Triage: 0161 419 5551.

[Health Visiting Team](#). Health Visitor advice line: 0161 8356789.



[Infant Feeding Team](#). 0161 419 4430 mobile: 07767 870 506.

[Family Hubs](#)

[Parenting Support](#).



[Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities \(EPEC\)](#). 0161 474 4400.

[Togetherness online learning pathways for families](#). Visit the Togetherness website and add the code REDROCK for free access.



[One Stockport Family Hubs app](#). Download in the App store (iOS) or Google Play store (Android).

Sources of Support in Stockport



If you're unsure what to do after a minor accident, you can call **NHS 111**.



If your child has a serious accident, **call 999** or **take them to A&E**. The **NHS website** has a useful page on what to do if your child has an accident.



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