

# Choosing Wisely<sup>®</sup>

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ConsumerReports<sup>®</sup>Health

American Academy  
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DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN<sup>™</sup>



## Home apnea monitors for SIDs

When babies need them—and when they don't

**S**IDS stands for sudden infant death syndrome. It is the sudden, unexplained death of an infant under one year old.

SIDS is rare, but parents worry a lot about it. It is more common in babies that were premature. There's also more risk if you had another baby who died of SIDS.

Home apnea monitors track the breathing and heart rate of sleeping babies. An alarm goes off if a baby's breathing stops briefly (apnea) or if the heart rate is unusually slow.

This monitor might sound like a good idea to concerned parents. But most newborns do not need a monitor. Here's why:

### **Home apnea monitors give little or no protection from SIDS.**

Research has not shown a clear link between apnea and SIDS. Even full-term newborns in the first few weeks of life may have brief periods of apnea. But this is not linked to SIDS.

### **Monitors cause unnecessary worry.**

Home apnea monitors cause many false alarms. The noise can make parents worry too much and lose sleep.



Parents may actually feel more fear and anxiety if they often use medical equipment to check on their healthy baby. One study found that parents of monitored infants said they felt more depressed, compared to parents of infants that weren't monitored.

## There are better ways to protect babies against SIDS.

There has been a lot of research on SIDS. Since the start of the “Back to Sleep” campaign in 1994, there are half as many SIDS deaths in the U.S.

This campaign encourages two important steps to reduce the risk of SIDS:

- You should always put your baby to sleep on his or her back—not on the stomach.
- You should also use a firm crib mattress and keep pillows, blankets, and stuffed animals out of the crib.

These steps help prevent “re-breathing.” Re-breathing can happen when a baby is sleeping face down or trapped in soft bedding. As a result, the baby breathes more carbon dioxide instead of taking in oxygen-rich fresh air. This may be related to raising a baby’s risk of getting SIDS.

### When is a home apnea monitor a good idea?

In rare cases, your doctor may recommend a home apnea monitor for your baby. The device may be needed if:

- Your baby needs home oxygen.
- Your baby has serious breathing problems.

## Advice from Consumer Reports

# Sleep safety for infants

### Always place babies to sleep on their backs.

Use a crib that meets current safety standards. Keep all loose bedding and toys out of the crib—including pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed animals, and dolls.

**Don’t sleep with your baby.** You can suffocate your baby by accident in soft bedding or by rolling on top of the baby. After you breastfeed in bed, put your baby back in the crib.

**Breastfeed your baby.** One study found that breastfeeding cut the risk of SIDS by up to 75 percent.

**Have a smoke-free home.** Smoke is a major risk factor for SIDS. Avoid smoking during pregnancy. And make sure there’s no smoking around your baby—at home, in the car, and in other places.

**Consider a pacifier.** Several studies suggest that babies who use pacifiers during sleep have less risk of SIDS. But if you’re breastfeeding, wait until your baby is a month old before using a pacifier. Your baby should get used to breastfeeding first. If your baby doesn’t like a pacifier, don’t force it.

**Don’t overdress your baby at night.** A baby that’s too warm has a higher risk of getting SIDS. Keep the temperature in your baby’s room below 72 degrees Fahrenheit.



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