

Keeping Your Baby Safe

In the hospital and at home

UWMC staff want to make sure your baby is safe while in our care and after you leave the hospital. You are an important partner with us in this effort. The guidelines and resources in this handout can help keep your baby safe.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden, unexpected death of an infant who is less than 1 year of age. We do not know what causes SIDS, but we do know certain things you can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS. Some of these are:

- **Remember “back to sleep.”** Always place your baby on her back to sleep, for naps and at night. This is the safest sleep position. Since we have been advising parents to place their babies on their backs to sleep, SIDS has decreased greatly.



Always place your baby on her back to sleep, for naps and at night.

- **Use a firm mattress.** Always place your baby on a firm sleep surface, such as a safety-approved crib mattress covered with a fitted sheet. Never place your baby to sleep on pillows, quilts, sheepskins, or other soft surfaces.
- **Clear the clutter from your baby’s sleep area.** Keep soft objects, toys, and loose bedding out of your baby's sleep area. This includes pillows, blankets, quilts, sheepskins, and pillow-like crib bumpers. Also, keep any other items away from your baby's face.
- **Do not allow smoking around your baby.** Do not smoke before or after the birth of your baby. Do not allow anyone else to smoke around your baby.



If you are breastfeeding, wait until your baby is 1 month old or is used to breastfeeding before using a pacifier.

- **Keep a separate sleeping area for your baby.** Keep your baby's sleep area near, but separate, from where you and others sleep. Your baby should not sleep in a bed or on a couch or armchair with adults or other children, but he can sleep in the same room as you or others. If you bring your baby into bed with you to breastfeed, put him back in his own separate sleep area after the feeding.
- **Try using a pacifier.** Think about using a clean, dry pacifier when placing your infant down to sleep, but do not force your baby to take it. (If you are breastfeeding, wait until your baby is 1 month old or is used to breastfeeding before using a pacifier.)
- **Keep your baby comfortable.** Do not let your baby get too hot during sleep. Dress your baby in light sleep clothing. Keep the room at a temperature that is comfortable for an adult.
- **Avoid products that claim to reduce the risk of SIDS.** Most of these have not been tested for effectiveness or safety.
- **Do not rely on a baby monitor to reduce the risk of SIDS.** If you have questions about using monitors for other reasons, talk with your healthcare provider.

Falls

Infants can fall. Emergency rooms report that falls are the most common accidents that cause injury in children 0 to 2 years old. Newborn falls often occur when the baby slips out of a parent's arms when the parent falls asleep.

To protect your baby from falls:

- Remember that pain medicines you may be taking if you gave birth by Cesarean may make you sleepy. When you and other caregivers who are holding your baby become sleepy, move your baby to a safe sleeping area.
- All caregivers should watch out for sleepiness in each other. It can come on quickly.
- Be aware that breastfeeding releases hormones in the mother's body that can make you very relaxed, and even sleepy.
- Never leave your baby alone on any surface he could fall from.
- Use safety straps on swings, high chairs, bouncers, and strollers.



It is normal for caregivers to feel frustrated when nothing helps soothe a baby. Plan ahead for what you will do to cope when you feel overwhelmed.

Shaken Baby Syndrome

Shaken baby syndrome is severely shaking a baby or child. It is a form of child abuse. It can cause lasting brain damage and damage to the baby's neck, spine, and eyes.

An angry or frustrated parent or caregiver may shake a baby when nothing they try stops the baby's crying. Even though the caregiver does not mean to hurt the child, shaking is still child abuse.

All babies cry. Crying tends to be worse in the evenings. Crying also begins to increase when a baby is about 2 weeks old. This normal increase in crying is called "the period of PURPLE crying."

PURPLE crying does not mean that the baby turns purple. The letters in PURPLE stand for:

- Peak of crying
- Unexpected
- Resists soothing
- Pain-like face
- Long-lasting
- Evening

The period of PURPLE crying continues until the baby is 2 to 3 months old. It then usually starts to decrease. To learn more, please watch the "Period of PURPLE Crying" DVD and read the brochure you received while you were in the hospital.

Soothing a Crying Baby

It is important for caregivers to learn ways to help soothe a crying baby. Some of these are:

- Swaddling
- Sounds
- Position
- Movement
- Suckling

Sometimes nothing will soothe your baby – he just cries. When this happens, it is normal for caregivers to feel frustrated. The most important thing you can do is have a plan to help **you** cope with your baby's crying.

Soothing Yourself

Create a list of things you can do if you start to feel overwhelmed or angry. **Do these things only if your baby is safe or someone else is taking care of your baby.**

Your list might include:

- Setting your baby down in a safe place, like the crib
- Calling a friend
- Sitting outside
- Taking a shower or bath

These resources can also help if you are feeling overwhelmed:

- Family Help Line: 800.932.HOPE
- Crisis Clinic (24 hours): 206.461.3222
- Period of PURPLE Crying: www.purplecrying.info



Your safety and your baby's safety are top priorities, both in the hospital and after you go home.

Hospital Security

We want to make sure that all babies in our care are protected. For this reason, we have many security measures in place.

- The Labor & Delivery Unit and the Mother Baby Unit have state-of-the-art security to protect your baby.
- The doors to both units are always kept locked.
- After delivery, your nurse will put an identification band on your baby's wrist. The band will have a unique hospital number and barcode. The mother's first and last name will also be on this band.
- Your baby will also wear an ankle band that is programmed into the hospital security system. If your baby is brought near an exit, alarms will sound and all doors on both units will lock.

No one has ever tried to kidnap a baby from UWMC. It is our responsibility to keep your baby safe.

In Your Hospital Room and Unit

It is normal for new parents to be concerned about the safety of their baby. Follow these tips to help keep your baby safe:

- Always keep your infant in sight, even when you go to the bathroom.



Get to know your nurses and others who are caring for you and your infant.

- Tell your nurse if there is any personal situation we should know about that might place you or your baby at risk.
- Never leave your baby alone in your room.
- We will always transport your baby in a bassinet in the hospital. Transporting your baby this way will help keep your baby from falling out of someone's arms. No one in the hospital should carry your baby in their arms. This includes you and your family.
- Get to know your nurses and others who are caring for you and your infant.
- If someone you do not know wants to take your baby from your room, check with your regular nurse to see if it is OK.
- Question anyone who wants information about your baby, even if you know them. **Call the nurses' station right away if you are concerned.** You can push the nurse call button at your bedside or come to the nurses' desk (be sure to bring your baby with you).
- If your baby needs tests or procedures, find out where your baby will be and how long your baby will be there. You can go with your baby to the test or procedure.

After You Go Home

- Only allow people into your home who you know well. Do not allow anyone into your home who you have met only briefly since you became pregnant or gave birth. There have been cases where a kidnapper has made first contact with a mother and baby in the hospital or a public place like a clinic or mall, and later took the infant from the family home.
- Be alert to people you have just met who volunteer to watch your baby, especially in public places and public restrooms. Take your baby into the toilet stall with you.
- Think about the risks involved if you:
 - Place a birth notice in the newspaper. **Never include your address.**
 - Use outdoor decorations to announce your infant's arrival, such as balloons, large floral wreaths, or wooden storks.

Car Safety

Car safety is very important. Injuries that occur in cars are one of the top 4 causes of infant death.

Car seats must face the rear of the car until a baby is at least 2 years of age. **Infants are 5 times safer in rear-facing car seats.** If the car is in an accident, a baby in a rear-facing car seat:

- Is much less likely to have a serious injury
- Will have much less force on their head, neck, and spine
- Is protected by the “cocoon” effect the car seat provides

Please read the chapter “Car Seat Safety” in this book.

Injuries

Injuries are most likely when:

- An infant is left alone. Never leave your baby unattended.
- The infant or caregiver is tired, ill, hungry, thirsty, or stressed.
- Family routines change.
- Others are caring for your infant.
- The baby learns new physical skills, such as crawling or walking.

Drowning

Drowning is most likely when an infant is left alone. **Never leave a baby alone in or near water.** A baby can drown in as little as 2 inches of water.

Burns

Babies are burned most often by house fires, inhaling smoke, hot liquids, and household electrical devices. To keep your baby safe from burns in your home:

- Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Have fire extinguishers.
- Never allow smoking inside your home.
- Do not drink hot liquids while you are feeding your baby.
- Do not pass hot drinks to other people while you are holding your baby.



Never leave a baby alone in or near water.

Choking

Choking is very common in babies. Expect it to happen and learn what to do when it does. To help prevent choking:

- Keep small objects away from your baby.
- Provide toys and food for your baby that are right for your baby's age.

Baby-Safe Zones

Every baby needs a place to play and explore. Create at least one baby-safe zone in your home.

- Use barriers or baby gates, keep floors clean, and provide the right toys for your baby's age in this area.
- Do a home safety search. Get rid of hazards or lock them up.
- No device can take the place of a caregiver watching your child to make sure he is safe. Do not rely on a baby monitor or other device.
- Playtime:
 - It is important for infants to spend awake time on their tummies each day.
 - Give your baby time to play alone in a baby-safe place.



It is also important for infants to spend awake time on their tummies each day.

Resources

Missing Children

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
800.THE.LOST (800.843.5678)
www.missingkids.com

SIDS

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/SIDS
- National Institutes of Health: www.nichd.nih.gov/sids

Shaken Baby Syndrome

- Period of PURPLE Crying: www.purplecrying.info
- Video from Seattle Children's:
www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/community-programs/period-of-purple-crying/

Car Seats

- 800.BUCKLEUP or www.800buckleup.org

Product Safety

Research the products you use to help care for your newborn and child as they grow. For information about product recalls, safety tips, and childproofing your home and other places where your child spends time, visit:

- Consumer Product Safety Commission: www.cpsc.gov
- Safe Kids USA: www.safekids.org

Baby Safety Classes

To learn more about keeping your infant safe, take a baby safety class that covers infant CPR and general safety. Visit these websites for more information:

- UWMC classes:
www.uwmedicine.org/services/obstetrics/childbirth-classes
- American Heart Association classes:
www.cprseattle.com/adult-child-infant-cpr-aed-first-aid
- Seattle Children's classes:
 - www.seattlechildrens.org/content.aspx?id=88132
 - www.seattlechildrens.org/classes-community/classes-events/cpr-and-first-aid-for-babysitters

Safety Phone Numbers and Websites

Emergency	Call 911
Washington Poison Control Center.....	800.222.1222
UWMC Community Care Line.....	206.744.2500
Washington Toxics Coalition.....	www.watoxics.org
Public Health – Seattle & King County	206.296.4600, www.kingcounty.gov/health

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about your baby's safety, ask your baby's healthcare provider.

For urgent concerns, call 911.