Infant & Toddler Sleep Safety Reducing Sids And Nap-Time Risks Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

Sleep should be the safest part of a child’s day, but for infants and young toddlers it can carry serious risks if safe sleep practices are not followed carefully. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and accidental suffocation remain leading causes of injury and death in children under one year old. In childcare settings, nap time happens every day, which can create a false sense of security.

Sleep incidents rarely happen because someone intended harm; they often occur when routines slowly drift away from established safe sleep practices. Consistency and attention are what keep sleep environments safe.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Sleep-related risks often develop quietly and quickly. Infants and young toddlers cannot reposition themselves easily, clear their airways, or call for help when something is wrong. Because of this, small changes in the sleep environment can become dangerous very fast.

Unsafe Sleep Positions

Placing infants on their stomach or side increases the risk of suffocation and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep unless a documented medical plan states otherwise.

Soft or Cluttered Sleep Environments

Blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, loose bedding, or soft surfaces can block an infant’s airway. Even items meant to provide comfort can increase the risk of accidental suffocation.

Reduced Supervision During Nap Time

When staff rely only on occasional checks instead of active monitoring, signs of distress may be missed. Infants can experience breathing problems or airway

obstruction quickly, and delays in noticing changes increase the danger.

Inconsistent Sleep Practices

When different staff follow different routines, children may be placed in unsafe sleep conditions without anyone realizing it. Consistency is critical because infants depend entirely on adults to maintain a safe sleep environment.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

Safe sleep practices protect infants and toddlers by removing hazards and maintaining consistent supervision. The safest sleep environments are predictable, simple, and followed the same way every time.

Safe Sleep Practices That Save Lives

- Back to Sleep: Always place infants on their backs for naps and overnight sleep unless a documented medical plan states otherwise.
- Firm, Flat Sleep Surface: Use a safety-approved crib or play yard with a firm mattress and tight-fitting sheet. Soft or uneven surfaces increase suffocation risk.
- Empty Crib: Keep the sleep space clear. No blankets, pillows, stuffed toys, wedges, or sleep positioners. If warmth is needed, use approved sleep clothing instead of loose bedding.

Consistent Routines

Follow the same safe sleep procedures for every child, every nap, every day. Consistency prevents confusion between staff members and reduces the chance of unsafe practices slowly becoming routine.

Active Nap-Time Supervision – Sleep does not mean supervision stops. Staff must visually check infants regularly to confirm normal breathing, safe positioning, and healthy colour. Listening from across the room is not enough.

Safe Sleep for Toddlers – Sleep environments for toddlers introduce different safety concerns that still require careful setup.

Spacing Between Sleep Areas – Cots and mats should be spaced far enough apart to prevent children from rolling onto each other or restricting breathing.

Appropriate Blanket Use – If blankets are allowed for older toddlers, they should be lightweight, placed below the shoulders, and used only according to the centre’s sleep safety policy.

Why Compliance Matters

Sleep safety is one of the first areas examined during licensing inspections and serious incident investigations. Regulators review written policies, staff training, supervision practices, and the physical setup of sleep areas.

FINAL WORD

Safe sleep practices are not flexible guidelines. They are life-saving rules. When everyone follows the same standards, drift stops, risk drops, and children

sleep safely.