



## Community Standards on Safe Sleeping Environments

***Members of the Central Ohio Hospital Council (COHC) are working together to address the dangers associated with unsafe sleep environments. The hospital systems have developed this set of community-wide standards, which are designed to ensure consistent clinical practices within central Ohio hospitals and adequate education of parents on safe sleep environments in the home setting. These standards were developed at the direction of the Board of Directors of the Central Ohio Hospital Council, were adopted by the Board on Sept. 3, 2013.***

### Purpose Statement

Despite significant efforts to improve child healthcare, infant mortality, defined as the death of a child less than one year of age, is a leading health concern in central Ohio. Parents and caregivers can make changes to their babies' sleep environment to make it safer and to reduce the risk for sudden infant death and other sleep-related causes of infant death. COHC-member hospitals support the recommendations and efforts of national healthcare organizations to improve safe sleep environments and are collaborating to ensure consistent clinical practices within central Ohio hospitals and adequate education of parents on safe sleep environments in the home setting. These standards attempt to address established risk factors for sleep-related infant deaths and injuries, including prone/side sleep position, overheating, soft sleep surface, safe sleep environment, and bed sharing.

### Hospital Policies and Practices

Franklin County hospitals will develop or review current policies to ensure that clinical practices in the hospital setting are consistent with recommendations of professional healthcare organizations regarding safe sleep conditions. These policies will include, but are not limited to, those hospitals listed below. After developing the policies, hospitals will routinely communicate them to all healthcare staff and physicians who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women and to their newborns in the hospital setting. Hospitals will strive to stay current on new recommendations that address safe sleep and update their internal policies, when appropriate.

- Hospitals will not place any items in the bassinet/crib, including pillows, pillow-like toys, quilts, comforters, loose bedding, diapers and wipes. If hospital staff or physicians who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women and to their newborns witness parents



or visitors placing items in the bassinet/crib, they will advise them that this could result in harm to the infant.

- Hospitals will place all infants under 1 year of age in the supine position for every sleep, unless an alternate sleep position is medically indicated.
  - There are very few medical reasons why a baby needs to be placed in the prone position. Even babies with reflux rarely need to be placed in the prone position. Determination to place a baby in the prone position can be made only by the attending physician and must be documented in the patient record.
- If hospital staff or physicians who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women and to their newborns/infants witness parents placing newborns/infants on their sides or in prone position, they will advise them that side or prone sleeping is not safe and is not advised.
- If hospital staff or physicians who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women and to their newborns/infants witness parents or visitors feeding or holding infants in an armchair or couch when they might fall asleep, they will advise them to return the infant to his or her crib and educate them on the potential dangers to the infant.
- Hospitals will not elevate the head of the infant's bassinet. If hospital staff or physicians who are involved in the care provided to pregnant women and to their newborns/infants witness parents elevating the head of the bassinet/crib, they will advise them that this could result in the infant sliding to the foot of the crib into a position that may compromise respirations.
- Hospitals will strive to place preterm infants and other NICU infants in the supine position for sleep as soon as the infant is medically stable and developmentally appropriate for a safe sleep position. This should be significantly before the infant's anticipated discharge.

### Education of Mothers in the Hospital Setting

Hospitals will strive to provide adequate and effective education to parents -- both in the acute-care and prenatal settings -- on the importance of establishing safe sleep environments in their homes. Points to be included in the education will include the following:

- Babies should be placed on their backs, alone and in their cribs for every sleep.
- Side sleeping can lead to prone sleeping and is not advised.
- Pillows, pillow-like toys, toys, quilts, comforters, sheepskins and loose bedding (i.e. blankets and sheets) should not be placed in a baby's sleep environment.
- Bumper pads should not be placed in cribs, as they can lead to entrapment, suffocation,



and strangulation.

- Bed sharing is strongly discouraged, as it is a leading cause of infant death. Room sharing without bed sharing is recommended. Cribs, portable cribs, play yards, or bassinets can be placed next to the parents' bed to facilitate feeding, comforting, and monitoring.
- Parents are encouraged not to feed or hold babies on an armchair or couch if the parent might fall asleep. Parents may bring infant into bed for feeding/holding while sitting in an upright position, but should return the infant to his or her crib when parent is ready to sleep.

---

The "Community Standards on Safe Sleeping" are in place in the following hospitals:

**Mount Carmel Health System**

Mount Carmel East Hospital  
Mount Carmel West Hospital  
Mount Carmel St. Ann's Hospital

**Nationwide Children's Hospital**

**The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center**

Ohio State University Hospital

**OhioHealth**

Doctors Hospital  
Dublin Methodist Hospital  
Grady Memorial Hospital  
Grant Medical Center  
Riverside Methodist Hospital

*COMMENTS ABOUT THE STANDARDS: These standards are consistent with a policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics, "SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment," released in October 2011 at the AAP National Conference & Exhibition in Boston and published in the November 2011 issue of Pediatrics. Supine position is the position of a person lying on the back. Prone is the position of a person lying with the chest down and back up.*

