

# GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCTS INTENDED FOR SLEEPING BABIES: HELP YOUR BABY SURVIVE & THRIVE

*Revised February 2015*

One of the most important decisions you will make as a parent is where your baby will sleep after coming home from the hospital. As I'm sure you've found out, the choices are endless! This paper will address common questions that parents have about cribs, cradles, bassinets, co-sleepers and other products intended for sleeping babies.

## **Where is the safest place for my baby to sleep?**

Your baby will sleep safest in a crib that meets current safety standards. All new cribs conform to the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)). The Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association also sets crib standards ([www.jpma.org](http://www.jpma.org)).

- The mattress should fit snugly in the crib. If you can fit more than two finger between the edge of the mattress and the crib slats – the mattress is too loose! The mattress should be covered with a tight fitting crib sheet – do not use an adult sheet on a crib mattress.
- Make sure the mattress is firm – soft surfaces are dangerous for sleeping babies. Test the firmness by pressing your hand into the mattress. It should feel firm and there should be no indentation when you lift your hand.
- Keep all bedding items and toys out of the crib while your baby is sleeping, including quilts, loose blankets, soft or pillow-like bumpers, pillows or stuffed animals. Layer clothing or use a wearable blanket or sleeper to keep your baby warm without using blankets.
- Place your baby's crib near your bed for at least the first six months (room sharing).

This will provide your baby the greatest protection against SIDS, suffocation and accidents during sleep!

## **Are there other safe options besides a full- size crib? Especially for my newborn?**

First Candle recognizes that not everyone can afford a full-size crib; that room-sharing may be difficult with a full-size crib; or that a small newborn just looks lost in a full-size crib! You may also be looking for something that makes it easy to reach over and pick up your baby to comfort or feed them during the night. It is important to note that at this time there are no safety standards around cradles, bassinets, co-sleepers and play yards. But by following these guidelines, you can feel confident that your baby will be safe.

- The mattress should be firm and fit snugly (always use the mattress that comes with the product).
- The sides should be slats or mesh to provide maximum air circulation.

Some sleep products have solid or padded sides. These are probably fine for a newborn that will stay in the same position you place them. But once your baby starts moving around during sleep and can get their face near the sides or wedged in the area between the side and the mattress, it's probably time to "graduate" to something that will offer a little more space and protection. Here are some good choices:

**Portable Cribs:** Portable cribs are smaller in size than a full-size crib, and they can easily be moved from one room to another or one place to another when visiting or traveling. They are also less expensive than a full-size crib. (Same safety rules apply as for cribs)

**Play Yards:** Play yards are also less expensive and even easier to transport! They usually have mesh sides (which provides for better air circulation) and offer two levels for the mattress – the top level (for newborns) makes it easy to get baby in and out without getting out of bed!

**Co-Sleepers:** These products are specifically designed to attach to the side of an adult bed – keeping your baby close to you, but in his or her own separate space. Great for facilitating breastfeeding and bonding!

**Bassinets:** Again, another product that makes it easy to have your newborn near you at night or during the day, which can help reduce the risk of SIDS. Be aware of size and weight restrictions and the potential for re-breathing (soft or padded sides.)

### Other important reminders!

- Used cribs may be dangerous. Do not use a crib that has loose, missing or broken hardware or has broken slats or railings. There should be no more than 2 3/8" between the slats (width of a soda can) and the corner posts should be less than 1/16" high.
- Used play yards, bassinets and cradles may also be dangerous. Check that the materials have no tears or holes and all parts are securely attached.
- It is important to note that you should always follow the manufacturer's safety guidelines when setting up and using any of these products. Many will also offer guidelines for the size and weight of the baby that should be followed.
- Always check for recalls of any product you purchase or are using. A recall list can be found at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).
- Always check the safety of any sleep product your baby may use when you stay in a hotel or overnight with family and friends.

Wherever your baby sleeps, make sure you avoid all soft bedding items and never use wedges or positioners – they have not been tested for effectiveness at keeping babies on their back and can be dangerous if your baby wiggles out of or turns sideways in these devices.

The vast majority of babies are comfortable sleeping on their back if they are placed that way from the minute they are born. Insist on back sleeping in the hospital when your baby is born, unless there is a medical problem that needs to be addressed.