

Being in the Know

I've learned lately that there are some advantages to working on a magazine covering life science technology and producing a daily newsletter filled with research news. Every now and then, I come across a story that directly impacts me or my family and inspires change. Case in point, I just learned that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) updated its guidelines to help prevent sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

The original guidelines were released in 1992 as part of a "Back to Sleep" campaign by AAP and are attributed to reducing SIDS by 50%. However, sleep-related deaths from other causes (i.e. suffocation, entrapment, and asphyxia) have, unfortunately, increased.

The policy statement, "SIDS and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Expansion of Recommendations for a Safe Infant Sleeping Environment," and an accompanying technical report, were presented Oct. 18, at the AAP National Conference & Exhibition in Boston and published in the November 2011 issue of Pediatrics (published online Oct. 18 and are available at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/12/peds.2011-2284.full.pdf+html> [1]). Healthychildren.org, a Website run by AAP, provides some highlights:

- Breastfeeding is recommended and is associated with a reduced risk of SIDS.
- Infants should be immunized. Evidence suggests that immunization reduces the risk of SIDS by 50%.
- Bumper pads should not be used in cribs. There is no evidence that bumper pads prevent injuries, and there is a potential risk of suffocation, strangulation, or entrapment.

For those of you without small children, bumper pads are essentially pillows that form a barrier around the crib. The idea is that they form a soft barrier that prevents the the child from injuring itself on the frame of the crib. To be honest, they seem mostly decorative to me, and the potential hazards they pose are well known. Parents could already buy bumpers made out of mesh that are supposed to eliminate suffocation risks. I'll bet we see those being pushed hard next time we're in Buy Buy Baby.

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Now I have to head home tonight and let my wife know that the bumpers in the crib have to go. I don't think she'll be surprised though. On this topic, she's even more in the know than I am.

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[1] <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/10/12/peds.2011-2284.full.pdf+html>