



# NEWS

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS**  
**COURT HOUSE, NORRISTOWN, PA., BOX 311, 19404-0311**

**Frank X. Custer, Communications Director**

**Jessica Willingham, Communications Assistant**

**PHONE (610) 278-3061 FAX (610) 278-5943**

**COMMISSIONERS: JOSH SHAPIRO, *Chair***

**VALERIE A. ARKOOSH, MD, MPH, *Vice Chair***

**BRUCE L. CASTOR, JR., *Commissioner***



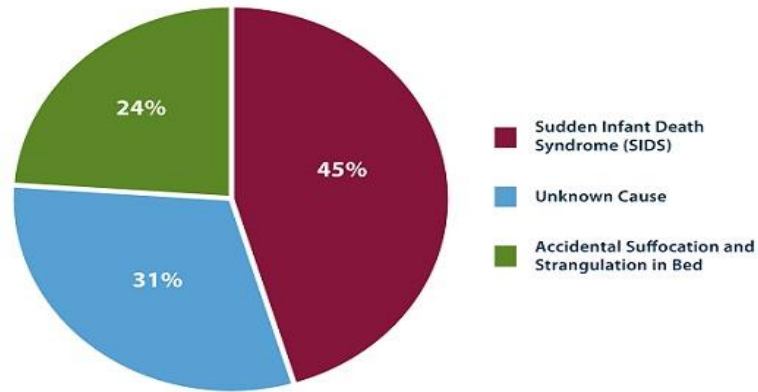
**RELEASE: October 19, 2015**

**Information about Safe Sleep and SIDS from the Montgomery County Health Department**  
***Leonard Olu-Williams MPH, CHES, Public Health Information Analyst***

**Norristown, PA (October 19, 2015)** – About 3,500 U.S. infants die suddenly and unexpectedly each year. These deaths are often referred to as Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID). Although the causes of death in many of these children can't be explained, most occur while the infant is sleeping in an unsafe sleeping environment. Some of these deaths are from entrapment, suffocation, strangulation, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is defined as the sudden death of an infant less than one year of age that cannot be explained after a thorough investigation is conducted, including a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and a review of the clinical history. SIDS is the third leading cause of infant deaths in the United States and the leading cause of death in infants one to 12 months old.

According to the Pennsylvania Child Death Review, SIDS was the leading cause of postneonatal deaths in the state in 2010 with 68 (22.7% percent of all postneonatal deaths that year). In 2011, it ranked second with 47 (16.4% of postneonatal deaths).

Fortunately, there are ways for parents to keep their sleeping baby safe. Since the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended all babies should be placed on their backs to sleep in 1992, deaths from SIDS have declined dramatically. However, sleep-related deaths from other causes, including suffocation, entrapment, and asphyxia, have increased.



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Compressed Mortality File

The above chart shows the breakdown of Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths by cause in 2013. Forty-five percent of cases were categorized as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, followed by unknown cause (31%), and accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed (24%).

### **What is the Montgomery County Health Department (MCHD) doing about SIDS?**

The Montgomery County “Cribs for Kids Program” is available for those who cannot afford a safe place for their baby to sleep. MCHD receives referrals for this program from community agencies. This is a donation and grant based program, and “pack ‘n play” style cribs are distributed as they are available. To learn more about the “Cribs for Kids Program,” please visit <http://www.montcopa.org/?nid=1127>.

### **What can I do?**

You can help save a baby’s life by:

Helping to get the message out to the community:

- Tell mothers and fathers you know about the dangers of unsafe sleeping conditions.
- Make sure the babies in your life have the opportunity to grow up by talking about safe sleep with the people you care about.
- Put pressure on companies that sell bumpers and comforters for babies’ cribs.
- There should never be any soft objects in a baby’s crib.
- Ask public officials to make the promotion of safe sleep a priority when human services and public health budgets are being discussed.

Inform the parents you know about AAP Safe Sleep recommendations:

AAP states that a baby should sleep in the same room as the parents, but not in the same bed. Avoiding bed-sharing reduces the risk of SIDS by as much as 50 percent.

Additional recommendations from the AAP to decrease the risk of SIDS include:

- Always place your baby on his or her back for every sleep time, and make sure other caregivers and family members do the same.
- Breastfeed your baby if possible.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy or after delivery. Do not allow others to smoke around your baby.
- Always use a firm sleep surface for your baby.
- Do not use fluffy blankets or other soft materials under your baby when putting them to sleep, and do not use wedges or other sleep positioners.
- Keep stuffed toys, bumper pads, and pillows out of the crib.
- Avoid overheating in the crib, keeping your baby warm, but not too warm.
- Offer a pacifier at bedtime or naptime.
- Immunize your baby.

These are recommendations from evidence gained through research performed over the past 30 years, and are designed for healthy babies up to one year of age.

Please visit the sites below for more information and resources on safe sleep:

- March of Dimes®, Safe sleep for your baby: <http://www.marchofdimes.org/baby/safe-sleep-for-your-baby.aspx>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Safe to Sleep® Public Education Campaign: [www.nichd.nih.gov/sts](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sts)
- Cribs for Kids®: <http://www.cribsforkids.org/>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome: [www.cdc.gov/sids](http://www.cdc.gov/sids)
- AAP Expands Guidelines for Infant Sleep Safety and SIDS Risk Reduction: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-expands-guidelines-for-infant-sleep-safety-and-sids-risk-reduction.aspx>