

## Comments on the use of bumper pads in infant cribs

Based on the article by Thach, Rutherford and Harris: Deaths and injuries attributed to infant crib bumper pads, J Pediatr. 2007 Sep, the possible risks of crib bumper pad use (death due to suffocation or strangulation) outweigh the possible benefits (avoidance of minor bruises/contusions). Twenty-seven cases of infant deaths involving bumper pads were cited by the authors.

In 2005, the Canadian Paediatric Society and Health Canada recommended that bumpers not be used in cribs due to concern about potential SIDS or suffocation risk. In this policy statement they reported 23 incidents involving bumper pads which included one strangulation death, one suffocation death and three near-suffocation events.

In a policy statement article by the Task Force on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome from the American Academy of Pediatrics, November 2005, recommendations for appropriate infant sleep position and safe sleeping environment are outlined and discussed in detail. One recommendation is to keep soft objects, loose bedding, and pillow-like bumper pads out of the infant's sleeping environment. (The article by Thach states that even thin, firm bumper pads pose a wedging hazard)

As a result of these AAP recommendations, Safe Sleep programs have been developed for newborns and infants. Information sheets for parents provided by the US Department of Health and Human Services show pictures of a safe sleep environment with a baby in an empty crib without bumpers. Information Sheets provided by the Baltimore County Child Fatality Review Team and the Baltimore County Department of Health state that the crib should always be **CLUTTER FREE** – No bumpers, toys, animals or clothing.

In contrast to this, many magazines show pictures of infant sleep environments that are not consistent with AAP guidelines. If bumper pads are advertised in parent magazines and are available for purchase in baby departments, then they must be safe. Messages given to parents are inconsistent. As health care providers we have an obligation to inform parents of the potential dangers associated with crib bumper pads and instruct that they not be used.

I believe crib bumper pads should be considered hazardous and that there should be proper labeling indicating their dangers. Consumers need to be informed.

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