

New Research on SIDS

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* published findings that indicate infants who die in their sleep of no apparent cause often have subtle defects in an area of the brain that regulates breathing, heart rate, and arousal.

Researchers have found that many of the deaths occurred while the babies, most of them boys, were sleeping on their stomachs, often on soft bedding or in a bed with someone else.

You can take a stand to prevent a potential SIDS related death from occurring at your center by sharing your policy on SIDS prevention with parents. The National SIDS & Infant Death Program Support Center (www.sids-id-psc.org) recommends the following:

- Put your infant sleep position policy in writing and give a copy to parents. You may want to copy the standards from *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*. Or you can write your own—just be sure to include each of the important points in the standards.
- Begin the conversation by asking about the baby's sleep position at home.
- Tell parents that you place all babies on their backs to sleep. Explain that this reduces the risk of SIDS.
- Tell parents that the American Academy of Pediatrics, SIDS Alliance, Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs, and National Institutes of Health recommend back sleeping as the safest position for babies.
- Tell them that, even though most babies will be just fine, there is a higher risk of SIDS when an infant is placed to sleep on his stomach or side.
- A few babies have medical conditions that require stomach sleeping. If parents insist that their baby must sleep on his side or stomach, tell them that you will need a note from the baby's doctor saying that this is how the baby should sleep.
- If the parents will not or cannot obtain a doctor's note, and they still insist that their baby sleep on his stomach or side, you might decide not to take care of their child. While it is difficult to lose a client, it is important to stick to your rules, especially rules that affect a child's safety. It is also important that parents respect your rules as a child care professional.
- You may need to reinforce your rules about sleep position with parents. Do not agree to place a baby to sleep on his stomach because he has a cold, is teething, prefers to sleep on his stomach, etc.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.