

Kingston and Richmond Child Death Overview Panel Newsletter – June 2019

This week, 3-9 June 2019 is Child Safety Week in the U.K, which this year has a focus on safety in family life and in the home.

New dangers in the home include things like button batteries that can kill when swallowed, child appealing washing capsules that can poison or nappy sacks stored under cot mattresses that can suffocate babies.

Dangers when out and about include distraction from devices when we're driving or walking near busy roads, the coffee culture trend that sees young children at risk from hot drink scalds in busy coffee shops and the loss of pedestrian education for children and families.



Following a warning from a coroner against giving babies “propped up” bottles after the death of a four-month-old baby boy it is worth reminding ourselves that choking is in fact one of the biggest causes of accidental death in the under 5s.

Once parents understand the nature of the risk, they're better equipped to take preventative measures. Here, we take a detailed look at why it's such a serious risk for children.

Many of the preventable accidents that we highlight result in death, disability or serious injury. Some, like burns and scalds, can cause lifelong injuries but are rarely fatal. Sadly however, choking can often be fatal.



It sounds obvious, but is often overlooked, that children aren't mini versions of adults. They differ in a myriad of ways, which makes them magical, but these differences can also put them at risk. They're smaller – in height and weight and inside! Their windpipes are narrower and still growing. This means that many small pieces of food which may seem okay could actually be dangerous to them.

Safety cards about Burns: <https://www.capt.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=305f5612-b2b1-4e0e-afad-bb5d48d23c2d>

Sleeping Nests and Pods

The Lullaby Trust issued a warning about some popular baby sleeping products sold in high street stores last year.

More than 1 in 3 parents have, or intend to buy baby sleep nests & pods which go against safer sleep guidelines.

The Lullaby Trust has warned that some popular sleeping products for babies do not conform to safer sleep guidelines. Items such as cushioned sleeping pods, nests, baby hammocks, cot bumpers, pillows, duvets and anything that wedges or straps a baby in place can pose a risk to babies under 12 months. Evidence shows that sleeping a baby on anything but a firm, flat surface, or using soft, heavy bedding, can increase the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They can lead overheating or potentially obstruct a baby's airway if they roll or their face becomes covered by loose bedding.

However, many of these products are created by trusted brands and can be found in well-known high street stores. Additionally a number of manufacturers make inaccurate claims about the safety of their products and as there are no safety standards that relate to sudden infant death syndrome it is very difficult for parents to know which products are safe for their baby.

Safer Sleep Advice Sheet

Parents, carers and professionals can reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome by following the advice below to create a safe sleeping environment for babies and toddlers. It's important to follow safe-sleep advice for sleeping in the daytime and when you're away from home.



- The safest place for babies to sleep is on their back, in a cot, in their parents' room for the first six months (but not in the same bed).
- It is unsafe for adults, children or pets to share a sleeping area with your baby.
- Adults sharing a bed with a baby can accidentally roll too close or onto a baby whilst asleep. There is a higher risk of this occurring if you have taken medication, alcohol or are excessively tired. Co-sleeping is also linked to an increased risk of SIDS if a baby was born prematurely or was of low birth-weight (under 2.5kgs).
- Adult beds, sofas and armchairs are not safe for sleeping babies. Never sleep on a sofa or armchair with your baby.
- Soft bedding such as pillows, quilts and duvets increase your baby's risk of SUDI and suffocation.
- Soft toys and other objects such as cot bumpers and sleep positioners should also not be placed in cots – a clear cot is a safe cot. Use a firm, waterproof, well-fitting mattress in good condition. Make sure any covers are tucked in, reaching no higher than the baby's chest so that they do not slip over the baby's head.
- Keep baby's head uncovered and place your baby on their back in the 'feet to foot' position. A baby sleeping on their front or side greatly increases the chance of SIDS.
- Overheating can increase the risk of death while your baby is sleeping. Babies can overheat due to too much bedding or if the room is too hot. Use lightweight blankets. If you fold a blanket in half, it counts as two blankets.
- Babies do not need hot rooms and it is rare for their room to need to be heated all night. The room temperatures should be between 16c and 20c.
- Don't worry if your baby's hands feel cold. This is normal. Check their tummy and if it feels hot remove some of the bedding.



- Do not smoke in pregnancy or in the same room as your baby. Smoking by either parent during pregnancy greatly increases the risk of sudden infant death. New born babies are at increased risk of SIDS if they are exposed to cigarette smoke. Do not let anyone smoke in the same space as your baby. For help and advice to stop smoking, try the NHS Smoking Helpline on 0800 0224 332 or visit the website <http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>
- Breast feed your baby if you can. Breastfeeding has been associated with a lower SIDS rate. Help and support with breastfeeding can be accessed by visiting the following website: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/breastfeeding-help-support.aspx#close>

The Lullaby Trust are a charity that provides specialist support for bereaved families, promotes expert advice on safer baby sleep and raises awareness on sudden infant death. For further information or advice please visit their website <http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/> or call their information line on 0808 802 6869.

UNICEF also provides helpful leaflets for parents and accompanying guide for professionals on caring for your baby at night. These can be downloaded here:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/babyfriendly/baby-friendly-resources/leaflets-and-posters/caring-for-your-baby-at-night/>