

NEWS FROM CPSC - PRESS RELEASE

Retailers Join CPSC in Promoting Safe Bedding Practices for Babies - Each Year 900 SIDS Deaths May be Caused by Soft Bedding

WASHINGTON, D.C. - To prevent deaths from soft bedding, seven major retailers are joining the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in kicking off a safety campaign promoting safe bedding practices for babies. As many as 900 baby deaths each year attributed to Sudden Death Syndrome (SIDS) may actually be caused by suffocation in soft bedding, such as quilts, comforters, pillows and sheepskins.

Babies "R" Us, IKEA, JCPenney, Kmart, Lands' End, Sears and Target, which account for the majority of baby bedding sales, are making changes to crib displays in retail stores, catalogs, advertisements and websites. Beginning this Spring, shoppers will no longer see cribs made up with pillows, quilts and comforters. Many retailers will be including cautionary statements about the use of soft bedding for younger babies in their catalogs, on signs attached to cribs, and on inserts that accompany baby comforters and quilts. When babies are featured in crib ads, they always will be pictured sleeping on their backs. Other retailers are going to create bedding safety brochures for customers and add quilt racks to their nursery product lines.

Since 1994, CPSC has warned about the danger of soft bedding to babies under 12 months. But when consumers went to stores or browsed through catalogs, they often got a different message. Cribs made up with comforters, quilts and pillows may have encouraged parents to use these items in the crib with an infant. Parents unaware of the warnings, would not know that these items could be deadly for young babies.

"Parents and caregivers will no longer get a mixed message on how to create a safe sleeping environment for their baby," said CPSC Chairman Ann Brown. "Whether browsing through a catalog or floor display, cribs will now display a safe way to put baby to sleep."

For babies under 12 months, CPSC, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development recommend the following to help reduce the risk of SIDS:

- Place baby on his/her back on a firm, tight-fitting mattress in a crib that meets current safety standards.
- Remove pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, pillow-like stuffed toys and other pillow-like soft products from the crib.
- Consider using a sleeper as an alternative to blankets with no other covering.
- If using a blanket, put baby with his or her feet at the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, only as far as the baby's chest.
- Make sure your baby's head remains uncovered during sleep.
- Do not place baby on a waterbed, sofa, soft mattress, pillow or other soft surface to sleep.

CPSC has worked with manufacturers to get warning labels on infant pillows, and is now working for a similar warning on baby quilts and comforters.

NICHD-FUNDED RESEARCHERS UNCOVER ABNORMAL BRAIN PATHWAYS IN SIDS VICTIMS

A team of researchers funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) has found that infants who died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) have abnormalities in several parts of the brainstem. The researchers presented their work in May at the joint meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies and American Academy of Pediatrics societies in Boston.

The finding builds upon the results of an earlier study that found abnormalities in the brain region known as the arcuate nucleus in children who died of SIDS.

"These findings show that SIDS infants have a more biological deficit than we previously believed--one that may originate early in fetal life," said Dr. Marian Willinger, of NICHD's Pregnancy and Perinatology Branch.

The findings were presented by the senior author of the study, Dr. Hannah Kinney and a researcher at Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston.

The researchers found that structures in the brainstem of SIDS infants were less likely to bind to the neurotransmitter serotonin than were the brains of infant who had died of other causes. Neurotransmitters are molecules that brain and nerve cells use to communicate. These molecules are produced in brain and nerve cells and bind to special receptor molecules on neighboring cells, in much the same way a key fits into a lock.

Serotonin is found throughout the brain. Specifically, the SIDS victims in the study were found to have decreased binding of serotonin in the nucleus raphé obscurus, a brain structure that is linked to the arcuate nucleus, as well as in four other brain regions. These brain regions are thought to play a crucial role in regulating breathing, heart beat, and body temperature, and arousal. The brain structures have their origin in a part of the rhombic lip, a region of the developing embryo that later gives rise to key structures in the brain stem.

The researchers have also published their findings in the "Journal of Neuropathology and Experimental Neurology": Volume 59, Number 5, 2000, pp. 377-384.

JAMA PUBLICATION,

Factors Associated with Caregivers' Choice of Infant Sleep Position Study, 1994-1998 The National Infant Sleep Position Study by Marian Willinger PhD et al., JAMA Vol. 283, No. 16. April 26, 2000