

# *Reducing the risk of* car seat cot death

Car seat cot death is very rare, but still carries a potential risk. Car seats are to keep babies safe when travelling and not to be used as a primary sleeping place. This leaflet offers practical advice when using car seats.

Young babies can experience respiratory problems if placed in a sitting position or a car seat. A baby's reflex to keep the head held up is not fully developed when still a newborn, making their heads flop down and restrict their airway. This is why it is always best to keep a young baby on their back wherever possible.

Car seats should only be used to transport babies in cars, and other sitting baby equipment should only be used once the baby is strong enough to support their own head.

Research suggests frequent breaks are taken on a long journey to get the baby out of the seat, even if this involves waking the baby up.

The same applies if bringing the baby back into the house if they have fallen asleep in the car seat. The baby's warm outdoor clothing should be taken off even if this involves waking the baby.

If the baby is due a sleep, they should be taken out of the car seat and put into the cot or crib. The safest place for a baby to sleep is on a firm, flat mattress.

## **What about car seats in prams?**

Using a pram with a car seat top is suitable to use but not as a primary sleeping place.

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in a cot or crib on their back and in the same room as a parent or carer.



## Advice for parents and carers on car seat safety:

- Never use a car seat in the house for your baby to sleep in.
- Stop your baby from scrunching up and over, keep an eye on their neckline.
- Make sure the car seat you buy is age appropriate and correctly fitted.
- Make sure grandparents and carers know how to fit the car seat and watch them practice.
- Babies travelling in a car seat should be observable by a responsible adult. If you are a lone driver driving a significant distance use road side services to check on your baby.
- Babies find it difficult to regulate their temperature and quickly overheat. When in the car remove any head gear the baby is wearing as they lose excess heat through their head.
- Remove thick snow suits and coats, cars heat up quickly and natural materials will help the baby's body with heat rather than nylons, polyester and man-made fabrics.

## Patient Experience Team

The team are available to offer advice or information on healthcare matters. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email. The team can visit inpatients on all Trust sites.

### The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 553140 or 0800 028 8059. Email: [pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk).

