



Taylor County Child Fatality Review Team



*******For Immediate Release*******

Date: September 20th, 2011

Time: 11:00 am

Location: Abilene/Taylor County Law Enforcement Center

The Taylor County Child Fatality Review Team will hold a joint press conference with Hendrick Medical Center and Abilene Regional Medical Center at the above listed date and time. The purpose of this press conference will be to raise awareness of the link between SIDS deaths of children and a safe sleep environment. Forty percent of SIDS deaths in 2009 were attributed to an unsafe sleep position of the infant.

In order to assist in educating new parents on the safest sleep position for their new infants, the Taylor County CFRT will be donating onesies to both hospitals for distribution to new parents. The onesies have the words “This Side Up” written on the front in an attempt to remind parents of the safe sleep position for their infants. The onesies were made available by the Texas Department of State Health Services. I am attaching a document with some facts about SIDS deaths, risk factors, and safe sleep environments.

Please join us for this event.

Sincerely,

Lynn Beard
Taylor County Child Fatality Review Team

SIDS Deaths: Getting the Facts

What is SIDS? Where and when did it occur?

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is the diagnosis given for the sudden death of an infant, 1 month to 1 year of age that remains unexplained after a complete investigation which will include an autopsy, an examination of the death scene, and a review of the victim's medical and family history. SIDS is a recognized medical disorder. Infants who succumb to the syndrome appear healthy before the incident, even to a physician. At this time there is no strong evidence to suggest that SIDS can be arrested in anyway. The first and only symptom is death. SIDS appears to occur after an infant has been put down for sleep. Victims may have been down for sleep for as little as ten minutes. There are no apparent signs of struggle or suffering. Though SIDS is associated with an infants' sleep time, and often occurs in the crib, the event may occur anywhere the infant is sleeping. SIDS events have occurred in infant seats, car seats, strollers, and in the parents' bed.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, SIDS, remains a leading cause of death for infants in Texas. To understand the extent of the issue, it is important to look at the data of the deaths reviewed and data analysis for the 2009 Texas CFRT Annual Report. In 2009 there were 123 deaths classified as SIDS in the State of Texas:

- Fifty-seven percent of SIDS deaths were infants two to four months of age.
- Forty percent of SIDS deaths occurred while the infant slept on their stomach or side.
- Fifty-four percent of the infants who were certified as having died of SIDS died while sleeping on an adult bed, couch, play pen or other sleep area beside a crib or bassinet.

SIDS can occur at any time between 1 month of age and 1 year of age however, 91 percent of SIDS deaths occur before the age of 6 months with the highest concentration occurring between 2 months and 4 months of age. SIDS affects all races and socioeconomic groups.

Years of evaluation have revealed what SIDS is not:

- SIDS is not hereditary.
- SIDS is not contagious.
- SIDS is not caused by immunization.
- SIDS is not choking.
- SIDS is not apnea.
- SIDS is not suffocation.
- SIDS is not child abuse.

The safest place for a baby to sleep is in the same room with a parent or caregiver but on a separate sleep surface, such as a safety-approved crib or bassinet. This allows parents to check on and bond with the baby and makes breastfeeding more convenient. Infants are often breastfed or comforted in an adult bed, then returned and placed in a crib or bassinet to sleep or when the parent is ready to return to sleep. Infants should not be brought onto an adult bed when the parent(s) are overly tired, on medications or substances that make them drowsy and less alert, when they are ill and are very upset or angry.

RECOMMENDED HEALTHY PRACTICES FOR PARENTS OF INFANTS

- Pregnant women take care of themselves during pregnancy and receive early prenatal care.
- Family members support pregnant women in efforts to get prenatal care.
- Parents quit smoking and remain smoke-free after the birth of the child.
- Children receive regular well-child check-ups.
- Parents who do not have a safe or adequate area for a baby to sleep should look for resources in their community that can help provide such items.
- Parents inquire on safety information on cribs, bassinets and other related items found in sleep environments, such as toys, bedding and blankets.
- Mothers should exclusively breastfeed their infants for the first six months and should continue to breastfeed for the first year and beyond as long as mutually desired by mother and child.

RECOMMENDED SLEEP POSITION

- Babies are placed on their backs to sleep for every sleep (for naps and at night.)
- Babies are given time on the tummy while awake and supervised by a responsible older teen or adult.
- Parents tell caregivers, relatives, friends and babysitters that their baby will be placed on the back to sleep.
- All healthcare providers counsel parents on safe sleep environments and practices.

RECOMMENDED SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

- Babies are placed to sleep in a safety-approved crib or bassinet with a firm mattress, using a well-fitting sheet made for the mattress.
- Parents maintain the home and the baby's sleep area free of cigarette smoke.
- Babies are never placed to sleep on soft mattresses or other soft surfaces such as cushions, sofas, chairs, waterbeds, or beds up against the wall or with loose headboards.
- In and around baby's sleep environment should be free of unsafe items, such as pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, other soft objects, bumper pads, plastic sheets, plastic bags, strings, cords or ropes.

The Taylor County CFRT makes these recommendations on sleep environments and safe sleep practices as well as general health practices to help reduce the number of preventable infant and child deaths. These recommendations are made to reinforce researched best practices for safe sleep of infants.

Sources:

2009 Texas State CFRT Safe Sleep Position Statement-April 2011

Texas DFPS website:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Information_for_Providers/sbs_sids.asp

Article by Lisa Newsom, Executive Director, North Texas SIDS Alliance