Why stomach sleeping can increase the risk of SUID

Video Transcript

Why does stomach sleeping cause a problem? One theory is when an infant lies on his or her stomach, he or she is likely to re-breathe. When we breathe, we usually breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. When an infant lies on his or her stomach, especially if it’s on a soft surface, or if a baby is sleeping with pillows, blankets or other soft objects, an infant can develop a pocket of carbon dioxide around his or her face. When the infant breathes in, they will breathe in that carbon dioxide that they just breathed out instead of breathing in fresh oxygen. As a result, the infant’s oxygen level decreases, whereas the carbon dioxide level increases. When an infant sleeps on his or her stomach, he or she sleeps more deeply and it becomes harder for a baby to wake up, especially if he or she is in a situation where the blood carbon dioxide level is too high, or the blood oxygen level is too low. Research suggests that some infants have a hard time waking up in these situations. If the infant doesn’t wake up enough to be able to move, so that he or she can actually breathe enough fresh oxygen, Sudden Unexpected Infant Death can occur. To reduce the risk of Sudden Unexpected Infant Death, always place an infant on his or her back to sleep.