



# Alabama Vital Stats

Alabama Department of Public Health

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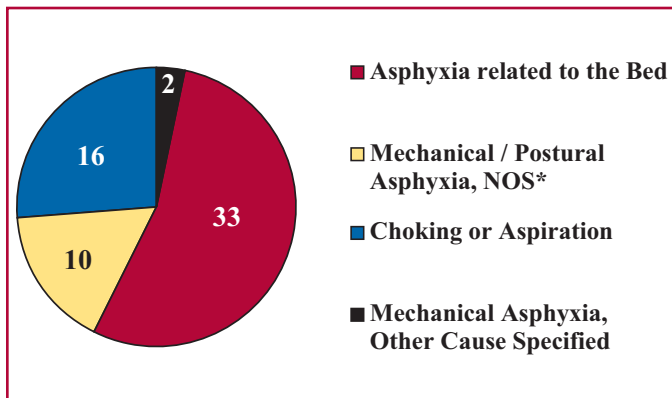
July 2006

## Creating a Safe Sleep Environment for Alabama Babies

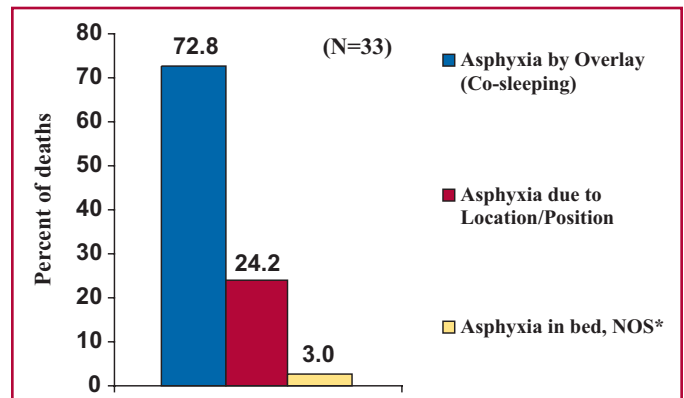
The practice of allowing an infant to co-sleep with any adult or sibling, allowing the infant to sleep in an adult-size bed, or laying a child on a couch or chair puts the infant at increased risk for injury or death.

Information from death certificates filed in Alabama's Center for Health Statistics for 2000 through 2004 shows 61 infants, less than one year old, died as a result of a threat to their breathing. Upon examination of these 61 death certificates, **33, over half, of the infant deaths were directly associated with hazardous sleeping environments.**

**Infant Deaths Due to Threats to Breathing, Alabama 2000-2004 (N=61)**



**Percent of Infant Deaths by Bed-Related Causes, Alabama 2000 - 2004**

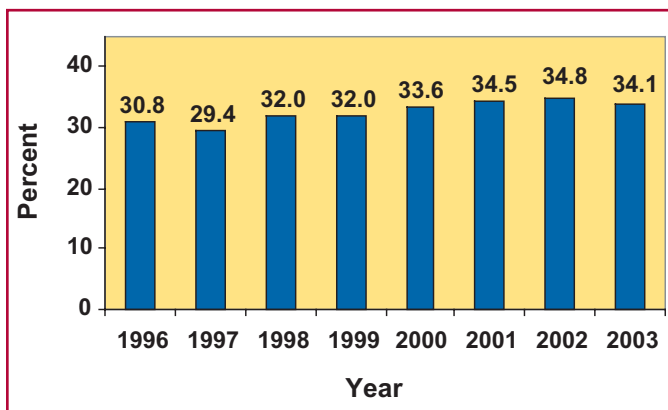


\*NOS = not otherwise specified, or no further details were listed on the death certificate.

In the above chart (right), 72.8 percent of the bed-related infant deaths were attributed to suffocation due to overlaying. Asphyxiation by overlay occurs when an individual is sharing a bed or couch with an infant and, while sleeping, accidentally rolls onto to the infant smothering the baby. Eight or 24.2 percent of the bed-related infant deaths were attributed to suffocation resulting from a position or location that obstructed the infant's ability to breathe, such as getting trapped between the mattress and wall or being placed face down on soft bedding. One infant death was described only as having occurred "in bed" with no further details.

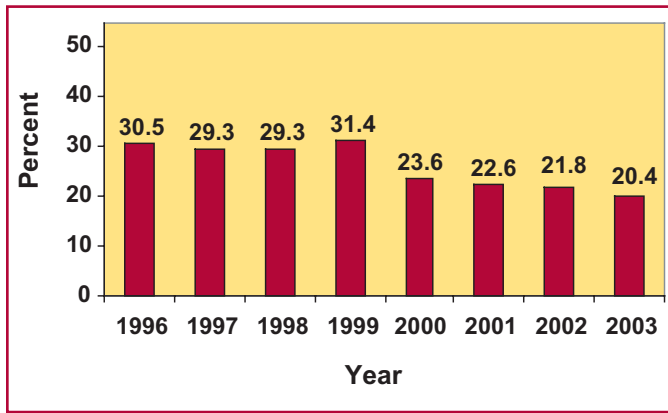
Because 24 of the 33 bed-related infant deaths resulted from overlaying by someone sharing the bed, the practice of Alabama mothers allowing their infants to co-sleep or bed-share was examined using data from Alabama PRAMS (Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System).

**Frequency of Infants Always or Almost Always Co-Sleeping, Alabama PRAMS, 1996 - 2003**



According to 2003 Alabama PRAMS, one in three Alabama mothers reported they ALWAYS or ALMOST ALWAYS allowed their infants to co-sleep with themselves or another person. Over an eight-year period in Alabama, this practice has actually increased by 10.7 percent

## Frequency of Infants Sleeping Alone (Never Co-Sleeps), Alabama PRAMS, 1996-2003



From 1996 through 2003, there has been a steady decline in the percentage of Alabama mothers who DID NOT allow their babies to co-sleep. In 2003, four out of five mothers reported they occasionally let their babies co-sleep. **Only one in five mothers NEVER allowed their infants to co-sleep.**

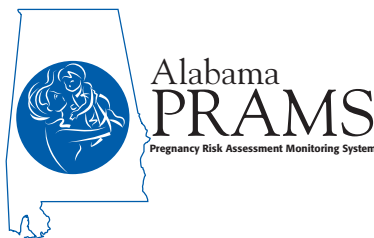
**The safest location for an infant to sleep is ALONE, in a CRIB (which conforms to Consumer Product Safety Commission safety standards) with NO EXTRA BEDDING OR TOYS and which IS LOCATED NEAR THE PARENTS' BED.**

In 2000, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development reported that **babies laid in an adult bed were “20 times more likely to suffocate than infants who sleep alone in cribs”**.<sup>1</sup> In a study conducted by the CPSC, from 1999 through 2001, approximately 180 children under two years old died after being laid in an adult bed.<sup>2</sup> Several bedding hazards were identified by this study.<sup>3</sup>

- **Overlaying or rolling onto the infant by another individual sharing the same bed (Co-sleeping).**
- **Entrapment between the bed and wall, or between the bed and some other object.**
- **Entrapment involving headboards, footboards, or the bed frame.**
- **Soft or fluffy bedding hazards (such as pillows, thick blankets, comforters which could hinder a child's breathing).**
- **Falls (sometimes into a pile of clothing or onto plastic, resulting in suffocation).**

**Parents must become aware of the hazards of allowing an infant to co-sleep or to sleep in an unsafe environment if Alabama's babies are to remain healthy and safe.**

*NOTE: In producing this fact sheet, all death certificates of infants less than one year old, for 2000-2004, and for ICD10 causes W75-W84 (Threats to Breathing) were examined.*



The PRAMS project is a survey of new mothers in Alabama that is funded under a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cooperative agreement #U50-CCU407103-13.

<sup>1</sup> The Center for Child Death Review. Suffocation fact sheet. <http://www.childdeathreview.org/causesSUF.htm>. Found February 13, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. NEWS from CPSA. CPSA, JPMA Launch Campaign About the Hidden Hazards of Placing Babies in Adult Beds. Page 1. <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSC/PUB/PREREL/prhtml02/02153.html>. Found February 13, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. NEWS from CPSA. CPSA, JPMA Launch Campaign About the Hidden Hazards of Placing Babies in Adult Beds. Page 1. <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSC/PUB/PREREL/prhtml02/02153.html>. Found February 13, 2006.