

**Safe Sleeping Policy**

**Background**

SIDS is short for “Sudden Infant Death Syndrome” and used to be called “cot death”. It means the sudden, unexpected death of a baby from no known cause. SIDS is the most common cause of death in babies between one month and one year of age. Most babies who die of SIDS are under six months and more babies die in winter than summer.

Meruka has put this policy in place using the facts and guidelines provided by the SIDS and Kids organisation (the recognised authority), in particular SIDS and Kids Safe Sleeping literature which has been compiled from contemporary research. Meruka also liaised with an Educator from SIDS and Kids Victoria.

Further details can be found on the website [www.sidsandkids.org](http://www.sidsandkids.org) or by phoning 1300 308 307.

# Sleeping guidelines

Studies have shown that sleeping babies on their backs lowers the risk of SIDS, whilst the chance of babies dying from SIDS is greater if they sleep on their tummies or sides. Meruka aims to reduce the risk of SIDS occurring in the Baby’s Room by implementing the following recommended safe sleeping practices for all babies aged 12 months and under:

* Babies are put to sleep on their backs.
* Babies sleep with their faces and heads uncovered.
* Babies feet are placed at the bottom of the cot, with sheets and blankets tucked in, not loose.
* All cots meet the Australian Standard for Cots (AS2172) and mattresses are firm, flat and well-fitting.
* Quilts, doonas, pillows, cot bumpers, lambs wool and soft toys are not used at all due to the risk of suffocation.
* Cots are kept away from all cords hanging from blinds, curtains and electrical appliances and mobiles are kept out of reach of little hands and mouths.
* An educator will be in the same room as sleeping children at all times.
* Smoking is not permitted within Meruka or in the outdoors areas. Members of staff who do smoke will ensure their hands are thoroughly washed before coming back into contact with any of the children in their care (babies, toddlers or kinder room children).
* As breastfeeding has been associated with a decrease in SIDS, breastfeeding is encouraged at the centre.

**Sleeping with soft toys, security blankets and sleep aids**

SIDS and Kids guidelines advise against infants under seven months of age sleeping with soft toys, security blankets or sleeping aids loose in their cot, because of the potential for them to cover their face and interfere with breathing. They note that babies under seven months of age are unlikely to have any benefit from such sleep aids.

For this reason Meruka ***strongly discourages*** the use of such items for infant’s sleep whilst at the centre. Babies of eight months and older may benefit from a sleep aid, particularly while away from a parent. Therefore, if families feel strongly about their child using such security items or sleep aids, they must provide the centre a letter in writing stipulating their request. It will then be at the discretion of the Centre Co-ordinator and relevant staff as to whether their particular sleep request is met (the risk increases the smaller the infant and the larger the soft toy/security blanket).**The use of dummies**

Research regarding dummy use and risk of SIDS is inconclusive.

**Babies over twelve months**

Whilst the risk of SIDS occurring is greater in infants twelve months and under, it is recommended that safe sleeping practices be maintained for children up to two years of age. Meruka will comply with safe sleeping practices for all children up to two years of age.

Daytime rest and or sleep times are important for a toddler’s wellbeing, acknowledging that daytime sleep patterns can vary significantly with around 25% of children having stopped napping by 3 years, another 50% may stop at 3-4 years. Meruka educators will endeavour to ensure that nap, rest or quiet times are offered to all children. While children may be asked to have a short rest or period of inactivity, educators will offer children alternative quiet activities if they do not need or want to rest.

**Other sleep practices**

Controlled comforting (sometimes called ‘controlled crying’ or ‘sleep training’) is a technique used to help children learn how to settle themselves to sleep, rather than adults feeding, patting or cuddling them to sleep. While families may choose to use controlled comforting techniques at home, we do note that educators will be unable to do this while your child is at the centre as it can be upsetting and disruptive to other children in our care.

Meruka does have designated time during the day for ‘rest time’. While children may be asked to have a short rest or period of inactivity, educators will offer children alternative quiet activities if they do not need or want to rest.

**Conclusion**

Rest and sleep times are a key part of most children’s daily routine, particularly for younger children and babies. At all times, the main considerations is the child’s health, safety and wellbeing, and educators will work collaboratively with parents in relation to sleep routines and related practices to ensure the best outcomes for the child.

**Referenced National Quality Standards**

* **Quality Area 2 – children’s health and safety**
  + **2.1** Each child’s health is promoted.
  + **2.3** Each child is protected.
* **Quality Area 4 – staffing arrangements**
  + **4.1** Staffing arrangements enhance children’s learning and development and ensure their safety and wellbeing.
* **Quality Area 6 – collaborative partnerships with families and communities**
  + **6.1** Respectful and supportive relations with families are developed and maintained.
  + **6.2** Families are supported in their parenting role and their values and beliefs about child rearing are respected.
* **Quality Area 7 – leadership and service management**
  + **7.3** Administrative systems enable the effective management of a quality service.