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# Cot death still biggest infant killer

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## Cot death still biggest infant killer

Posted on Thursday 13th September 2012

Over 250 babies die of cot death in England and Wales each year, making it the most common cause of death in babies aged over one month old.

Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show the North West Region had the highest unexplained infant death rate in England and Wales during 2010. In Cumbria between 2004 and 2010 there were 14 unexplained infant deaths registered.

Cot death or Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the sudden unexpected death of an apparently well infant. The exact cause of SIDS is not known, but it is more common in babies with a low birth weight or in babies born prematurely.

Although the cause is unknown, parents can take steps to reduce the risk by following these tips:

- Place your baby on its back to sleep
- For the first six months place the baby's cot in the same room as you sleep in
- Do not smoke whilst pregnant
- Do not let anyone smoke in the same room as your baby
- Do not share a bed with your baby, especially if you've been smoking, drinking or taking drugs
- Never sleep with your baby in an arm chair or on a sofa
- Do not let your baby get too hot
- Use sheets and thin blankets in your baby's cot and don't use duvets or pillows
- Tuck the baby's blanket firmly around them no higher than their shoulders
- Do not cover the baby's head
- Place your baby in the feet to foot position (with their feet at the end of the cot or pram)

At five or six months old, babies will start rolling over by themselves, but the risk of cot death dramatically reduces at this age.

Dr Rebecca Wagstaff is NHS Cumbria's Deputy Director of Public Health. She said: "Cot death is a sad event which is very traumatic for parents and families. Although we don't know the exact reasons why it affects some babies and not others, there are steps parents can take to protect their children.

"One of the most important steps which parents or potential parents can take is to avoid smoking around their baby or unborn child because of the long term damage it can cause and the heightened risk of cot death.

"If anyone needs support to help quit smoking, they can contact Cumbria's Stop Smoking Service for free confidential advice and support, by calling 01900 324222, texting QUIT to 82540 or by visiting a participating pharmacy."

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