

Back to Sleep: Parents' Concern about Choking (Babies sleeping on their back)

Many parents worry about having a baby sleep on their back. There is a concern that the baby might choke.

Having your baby sleep on the back may be safer than sleeping on the stomach. This is because of the position of the airway.

When a baby is on their back, the opening to the lungs is on the top. The opening to the stomach is on the bottom.

In this position, anything the baby spits up will go back down into the stomach and not the lungs.

If a baby is on their stomach, anything the baby spits up may go into the lungs rather than in the stomach. This is because the airway opening to the lungs is now on the bottom. See picture below.



Airway

The airway is on top when baby is on their back.



Airway

Baby is on their stomach, with the airway on the bottom.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.