

## **Benefits and Harms Associated With the Practice of Bed Sharing: A Systematic Review.**

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**Objective:** To examine evidence of benefits and harms to children associated with bed sharing, factors (eg, smoking) altering bed sharing risk, and effective strategies for reducing harms associated with bed sharing.

**DATA SOURCES:** MEDLINE, CINAHL, Healthstar, PsycINFO, the Cochrane Library, Turning Research Into Practice, and Allied and Alternative Medicine databases between January 1993 and January 2005. Study Selection: Published, English-language records investigating the practice of bed sharing (defined as a child sharing a sleep surface with another individual) and associated benefits and harms in children 0 to 2 years of age.

**Data Extraction:** Any reported benefits or harms (risk factors) associated with the practice of bed sharing.

**Data Synthesis:** Forty observational studies met our inclusion criteria. Evidence consistently suggests that there may be an association between bed sharing and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) among smokers (however defined), but the evidence is not as consistent among nonsmokers. This does not mean that no association between bed sharing and SIDS exists among nonsmokers, but that existing data do not convincingly establish such an association. Data also suggest that bed sharing may be more strongly associated with SIDS in younger infants. A positive association between bed sharing and breastfeeding was identified. Current data could not establish causality. It is possible that women who are most likely to practice prolonged breastfeeding also prefer to bed share.

**Conclusion:** Well-designed, hypothesis-driven prospective cohort studies are warranted to improve our understanding of the mechanisms underlying the relationship between bed sharing, its benefits, and its harms.

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