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# SIDS Risk Reduction Continuing Education Program Emphasizes Important Role of Nurses in Health Care

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## Citation

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## Abstract

### Figure 1



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National Institute of Child Health and Human Development  
(NICHD)

The National Institutes of Health has created a continuing education program designed to help nurses communicate the risk factors for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) to parents and child caregivers. Nurses are a key information resource for new parents and often spend the most time with families in the hospital following the birth of a child.

The Continuing Education Program on Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Risk Reduction was developed by the NIH's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) in collaboration with national nursing and health organizations. The program reviews the most current research findings and theories about SIDS and provides nurses with practical approaches to communication about SIDS in a multi-cultural environment.

Although SIDS deaths have declined since the NICHD initiated the SIDS risk reduction Back to Sleep campaign, it remains the leading cause of death in U.S. infants between one month and one year of age. By consistently placing

infants on their backs to sleep and using other safe sleep practices, nurses serve as role models to convey proven risk-reduction techniques.

"Nurses who care for infants and families in the hospital are in a unique position to educate parents and influence health and safety practices," said Duane Alexander, M.D., director of the NICHD, the NIH institute distributing the program materials. "This curriculum provides proven strategies that nurses can communicate to parents, families, and caregivers to help them reduce the risk of SIDS."

The curriculum was developed by the NICHD and the NINR in partnership with a number of national organizations, including First Candle/SIDS Alliance; the Academy of Neonatal Nursing; the American College of Nurse Midwives; the Association of SIDS and Infant Mortality Programs; the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses; the March of Dimes; the National Alaska Native/American Indian Nurses Association; the National Association of Neonatal Nurses; the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners; the Society of Pediatric Nursing; and the Washington State Department of Health.

"We know that even a brief intervention on the part of nurses can have an impact on parents' behaviors," said NINR director Patricia Grady, Ph.D. "This CE module is unique in that it reviews the most current research about SIDS but also provides nurses with a variety of answers to many of the most typical questions new parents ask about safe sleeping."

The curriculum is approved for 1.1 contact hours of continuing education credit from the Maryland Nurses Association, which is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center Commission on Accreditation to provide continuing education. This two-session program includes lessons on the following information:

- **Understanding SIDS:** The lesson defines SIDS, estimates its prevalence, and its possible physiological causes.
- **Understanding SIDS Risk:** This lesson looks at dangers in the sleep environment that put infants at higher risk of SIDS.
- **Reducing SIDS Risk:** This lesson presents factors that can reduce the risk of SIDS, such as placing infants on their backs to sleep for naps and at night, and provides risk-reduction recommendations.
- **Nurses as Role Models for Parents:** The lesson explains research findings related to nurses' importance as role models for parents and as a primary source of health information.
- **Challenges to SIDS Risk Reduction:** This lesson addresses cultural and societal factors that may affect compliance with SIDS risk-reduction recommendations.
- **Communicating about SIDS Risk Reduction:** This lesson offers suggestions on how to discuss SIDS with families and provides answers to common questions about SIDS and sleep position.

Nurses can order a hard copy or download an electronic version of the continuing education booklet through the NICHD's Web site, at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sidsnursesce/>, or by calling 1-800-370-2943. The NICHD and its partners are also working to develop an interactive online version of the program, which should be available toward the end of 2007.

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The NICHD sponsors research on development, before and after birth; maternal, child, and family health; reproductive biology and population issues; and medical rehabilitation. For more information, visit the Institute's Web site at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — The Nation's Medical Research Agency — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

## **References**

**Author Information**