

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

Date: October 2, 2024
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Catherine Cioffi
Communications Director
Office - (914) 995-2932
Cell- (914) 954 -5579
CCioffi@westchestergov.com

COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT SAFE SLEEP

October is Safe Sleep and Sudden Infant Death Awareness Month

(White Plains, NY) – During Safe Sleep and Sudden Infant Death Awareness Month in October, the Westchester County Health Department is reminding everyone who cares for an infant to always follow the ABCs of Safe Sleep. The safest way for babies to sleep is Alone, on their Backs and in a Crib, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Westchester County Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “To keep them safe, always place baby to sleep on his or her back, alone in a crib on a firm flat mattress covered only by a fitted sheet, with no soft toys, blankets, pillows or bumpers. Babies may share a room, but never a bed. It is never safe to share a bed, even for a short amount of time, because a baby can suffocate in just a few moments.”

There are 3,400 sleep-related deaths among babies each year in the U.S., according to the CDC. About 90 infants die each year in New York from sleep-related causes, according to the New York State Department of Health. Locally, the Westchester County Child Fatality Review Team reviewed nearly 80 child fatalities over the past 10 years.

Professor of Pediatrics at New York Medical College School of Medicine, Director of Pediatric Forensic Services at the Westchester Institute for Human Development, and Chief, Section of Child Abuse Pediatrics Program at The Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital/WMCHealth Dr. Jennifer Canter said: “An unsafe sleep environment that includes pillows, stuffed animals or soft bedding, as well babies who bed-shared or were put to sleep on a soft surface such a couch, was the most common thread among the far too many infant deaths I have evaluated as a member of the County’s Child Fatality Review Team for the past 22 years. Parents, grandparents and caregivers can save their baby’s life by practicing the ABCs of Safe Sleep every time baby naps or goes to sleep and making sure that everyone who cares for their baby does, too.”

The Health Department will share the ABCs of Safe Sleep through social media and on its web pages.

Alone:

- Back to sleep for every sleep.

- Use a firm sleep surface.
- Breastfeeding is recommended.
- Room share, don't bed share. Infants sleep in the parents' room on a separate surface designed for infants, ideally for the first year of life, but at least for the first six months.
- Keep soft objects and loose bedding away from the infant's sleep area.
- Consider offering a pacifier at nap time and bedtime once breastfeeding is established.
- Avoid smoke exposure during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drug use during pregnancy and after birth.
- Avoid overheating and head covering in infants.
- Pregnant women should obtain regular prenatal care.
- Dress baby in one more layer of clothing than you may feel comfortable in within the same setting

Back:

- Always place baby on his or her back.
- No sleeping on tummy or sides.
- Tummy time is for supervised play time.
- No pillows or wedges in crib.

Crib:

- Baby should sleep in a safe and separate crib or bassinet.
- Use tightly fitted sheets with no blankets.
- Never allow baby to sleep on a couch.
- No futons, chairs or waterbeds.

###