

# POSITIONING YOUR PREMIE

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Traditionally, infants have slept on their tummy (also called the “prone” position) because they seemed more comfortable and would sleep better. However, over the last decade studies have shown that during the first year of life all infants who sleep on their abdomen are at a higher risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). It is important to understand that sleeping prone does not cause SIDS, it only increases the risk because it may change an infant’s swallowing reflex.

If a premature infant has been sleeping on her abdomen in the hospital, parents may be confused about how to position her once she is home. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that premature infants be positioned on their backs, unless their physician suggests otherwise. The AAP discourages using the side-lying position because many infants will roll over onto their tummy from their sides.

If your preemie is used to sleeping on her abdomen, it may be difficult to transition her to her back at home. Making her feel snuggled with help. Roll-up thin blankets and place them around her sides, bottom, and even touching the top of her head. Never use soft bedding materials, such as pillows, sheepskins, or thick comforters. Ask your doctor about the best way to position your preemie if she has special needs such as gastroesophageal reflux or breathing difficulties. Be sure to put your baby on her abdomen while she is awake to encourage the use of important neck and shoulder muscles that might not be used while she is on her back.