

Memorial Hospital, Healthier Together, & SIHF Healthcare Collaborate To Promote Infant Safe Sleep Awareness

by Tiffany Davis

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ST. CLAIR - Memorial Hospital, HEALTHIER TOGETHER, SIHF Healthcare, and the Healthy Start Consortium have joined forces to help prevent sleep related infant deaths in St. Clair County.

October is Safe Sleep and SIDS Awareness Month, a nationwide prevention and education campaign aimed at reducing the risk of sleep-related infant deaths by providing essential information to parents, caregivers, and the public about the importance of creating a safe sleep environment. Approximately 3,500 infants die annually in the United States from sleep-related infant deaths, including sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and SIDS disproportionately impact low-income families, and families of color, especially Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native.

In 2020, 111 Illinois babies died from SUID before their first birthday. Sudden Unexpected Infant Death is the 3rd leading cause of infant mortality in Illinois.

Hospitals and community organizations have come together to play a part in ensuring safe sleep practices for infants. BJC Memorial has been recognized as a Gold Safe Sleep Hospital by the National Safe Sleep Hospital Certification Program, which was created by Cribs for Kids.

“As both a parent and a pediatrician, sudden unexplained infant death is scaring and heartbreaking for our entire community,” said Dr. Shawn O’Connor, chief of pediatrics and neonatology medical director at Memorial’s Family Care Birthing Center in Shiloh. He noted that while parents are the usual targets of educational effort, there are a number of way grandparents, aunts, uncles, babysitters, childcare providers and really anyone care for babies can lower the risk:

1. Place babies on their backs to sleep for naps and at night
2. Use a sleep surface for babies that is firm, flat, level, and covered only with a fitted sheet
3. Share a room (not your bed!) with your baby for at least the first 6 months.
4. Keep things out of your baby’s sleep area (no toys, stuffies, or other items)
5. Avoid swaddling once your baby starts to roll over
6. Give babies plenty of “tummy time” when they are awake and when someone is watching them

“SIHF Healthcare Healthy Start program offers safe sleep education and distributes resources to families that need a safe place for baby to sleep,” said Paula Brodie, vice president of support services at SIHF Healthcare. “The Healthy Start Consortium is excited and committed to working with our hospitals and community organizations to educate parents and caregivers on the ABCs of safe sleep. Every baby deserves to celebrate *Day 366!*”

“The HEALTHIER TOGETHER collective impact movement is designed to accomplish together what no single organization can accomplish alone- build healthier communities through healthy collaborations,” said Mark Peters of HEALTHIER TOGETHER.” We’re delighted to participate with all the organizations who make up the Maternal and Child Health partnership to promote their ABCs of Safe Sleep initiative. The campaign, which is now in its 3rd year, also includes assistance from the St. Clair County Health Department’s Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Our goal is to continue to support the efforts of these dedicated partners so that families and newborns can sleep well into a long, healthy and productive life.”