

Dow Jones Reprints: This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers, use the Order Reprints tool at the bottom of any article or visit www.djreprints.com

[See a sample reprint in PDF format.](#)

[Order a reprint of this article now](#)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WSJ.com

OCTOBER 7, 2008

Study Suggests Fan Use Cuts SIDS Risk in Babies

By JENNIFER CORBETT DOOREN

Using a fan while a baby is sleeping appears to significantly cut the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, according to new research.

Researchers at the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Oakland, Calif., compared 185 babies who died from SIDS in 11 California counties between May 1, 1997 and April 30, 2000, with 312 normal infants from similar socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds living in the same counties. Mothers were asked several questions about fan use, pacifier use, room location, sleep surface, the type of covers over the baby, bedding under the infant, room temperature and whether a window was open.

The study, which is being published in the October issue of the Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, found that using a fan cut the risk of SIDS by 72%. The use of a fan in a room with a temperature higher than 69 degrees Fahrenheit was associated with a 94% decreased risk of SIDS compared with no fan use.

SIDS, or a sudden and unexplained death of a baby younger than one year old, kills about 2,500 infants annually and is the leading cause of death in that age group. While the cause of SIDS is unknown, one theory is that babies re-breathe exhaled carbon dioxide trapped near their airways from bedding or sleeping on their stomachs.

Since the mid-1990s it's been recommended that infants be placed on their backs to sleep rather than their stomachs. That recommendation, along with others such as sleeping on a firm mattress and avoiding soft bedding, was linked to a more than 50% decline in SIDS deaths from 1992 to 2003.

The lead researcher in the latest study, De-Kun Li, explained that fan use increases air movement in a baby's bedroom that could protect babies from re-breathing carbon dioxide.

"If parents want to take an extra measure, they should consider using a fan," he said. Dr. Li, a reproductive and perinatal epidemiologist, stressed that using a fan isn't a substitute for placing babies on their backs to sleep.

Marian Willinger, Special Assistant for SIDS Research at the Eunice Kennedy

Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, said the findings on fan use were interesting but need to be replicated.

"It cannot be emphasized strongly enough, however, that there is no substitute for the most effective means known to reduce the risk of SIDS: always placing infants for sleep on their backs," Dr. Willinger said in a statement.

Since 2005, it's also been recommended that infants use a pacifier. In 2005, Dr. Li released research from the same group of women used in the fan study, showing use of a pacifier cut the risk of SIDS by 90%. That finding helped back up recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics on adding pacifiers to the list of recommendations to cut SIDS risks.

The new study also looked at whether windows were open or closed. Babies who slept with an open window were less likely to die from SIDS compared to babies who slept with a closed window, but the finding wasn't considered statistically significant. The study was funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health and Kaiser Permanente.

Write to Jennifer Corbett Dooren at jennifer.corbett-dooren@dowjones.com

Copyright 2008 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved
This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our [Subscriber Agreement](#) and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com