

Guidance from Ministry of Health following September earthquake:

MAKE EVERY SLEEP A SAFE ONE FOR YOUR BABY

Following the Christchurch quakes, many babies will now be sleeping in makeshift beds away from their own homes. This means that some babies may be placed to sleep in dangerous places, such as on sofas or in a bed with other children or adults. Many parents will be tired as the aftershocks are preventing a good night's sleep. A parent who is very tired or has consumed alcohol before going to bed should never share a bed with their baby. This is because they will sleep more heavily and will be less aware of the baby while they are asleep. This puts the baby at a high risk of being suffocated. Dr Pat Tuohy, chief advisor child and youth health, said there are three things parents and caregivers should remember wherever and whenever baby sleeps: They should be face up, face clear and smoke free. "This 'safety formula' will help keep baby safe and reduce the chances of a baby dying in their sleep."

Face up - Babies should sleep on their back. In this position it's easiest for them to breathe, and allows their strong gag and swallow reflexes to protect them if they spill. A clear face protects babies from suffocation.

Face clear - Babies need to be in a safe place, and shouldn't sleep on a couch or in a bed with bedding or pillows that could block their breathing.

Smoke free - Your baby was designed to grow and develop smokefree. All smoking harms babies, especially in pregnancy. Smoking takes oxygen and weakens vital systems (such as breathing) as babies develop. When born, such babies need extra protection - as do babies born early. "Sudden unexpected death is extremely rare for babies protected by this safety formula," Dr Tuohy said. "The quakes have caused major disruption to the lives of many people - I'd like to make a plea to parents and caregivers to stick to this safety routine when putting their baby down to sleep."