



NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES (INC)

8/5/09

Press Statement - SUDI

The New Zealand College of Midwives (NZCOM) is the professional organisation for midwives, representing over 85% of practicing midwives in New Zealand.

We welcome the Coroners interest in this subject and any steps which may lead to a reduction in SUDI.

Midwives have always emphasised and will continue to emphasise the need for babies to sleep in a safe sleeping environment. The key messages are that babies should sleep on their backs, in the same room as the parents and on a firm surface with no pillows, pads or bed covering that could cover their face.

SUDI occurs in our most vulnerable babies and there are often several stressors or risk factors that when occurring together can increase the risk. Babies that are more vulnerable are those that have been exposed to smoke during pregnancy or following birth, those that are premature and babies that are formula fed.

Co-sleeping

Midwives are guided by evidence, and there are often grey areas in the evidence. There is currently a lot of work being done to define the risk for babies that are vulnerable. Research suggests that the reality is that at least 50% of babies co-sleep with an adult at some time in the weeks and months following the birth. The most common place to co-sleep is in the bed, the reasons for this are for feeding, to help the baby settle or cultural reasons. For most babies this is not a problem as long as there has been consideration given to safe co-sleeping practices.

We would advise that parents should not co-sleep in the following situations:

- On sofa's or chairs
- If either parent is a smoker or the mother has smoked during pregnancy
- If either parent has been drinking alcohol or taking drugs

Midwives will continue to work with other professional groups to seek the reasons for SUDI, identify the risks and pass this information onto the women and families in their care

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