

## Position statement

### Co-sleeping and bed-sharing

The NCT supports parents who choose to co-sleep with their baby as sleeping in close proximity has many advantages for babies and for parents. The baby is able to breastfeed without disturbing the mother and is soothed by the presence of a parent. As a result, the baby is likely to cry less enabling the parents to get more sleep.

Research evidence suggests that bed-sharing is safer than falling asleep on a sofa with a baby and, provided that the parents have not been smoking, drinking or using drugs, and are not obese, is no less safe than putting the baby to sleep in a separate room.

Around half of all UK mothers sleep in bed with their baby at some time, so it is important for parents to know how to share their bed as safely as possible, and to know about the circumstances when bed-sharing has been shown to involve increased risks.

The Department of Health advises that bed-sharing (or co-sleeping) should be avoided if one or both parents:

- is a smoker
- has consumed alcohol
- has taken mind-altering drugs or drowsiness-inducing medication
- has a condition that can cause an altered consciousness eg diabetes or unstable epilepsy
- is very obese
- is excessively tired

Or

- if either parent, or the baby, has a fever or has any signs of illness.

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### Background information to this position statement

1. 48% of UK mothers sleep in bed with their baby at some time. Bolling K, Grant C, Hamlyn B, Thornton A. Infant Feeding Survey 2005. The Information Centre, 2007.
2. Babies should be put on their back to sleep, never on their front or side, whether in a cot or in bed with a parent. The NCT website contains safety

information for parents who co-sleep or bed-share with their baby:  
<http://www.nct.org.uk/info-centre/a-to-z/view/230>