

Finnish Baby Boxes: What are they, and what do we know?

The use of Finnish “baby boxes” in the United States is gaining attention as a potential way to increase safe sleep for babies and reduce deaths among infants.



Finland's baby box program

- Given to new moms in Finland since the 1930s.
- Pregnant women who visit a doctor or prenatal clinic before the 4th month of pregnancy receive a baby box.
- The baby box is a sturdy cardboard box with a snug fitting mattress where a baby can sleep.
- Infant deaths in Finland decreased after the baby box program began (from over 60 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 1945 to roughly 2.5 in 2016).
- Similar trends in infant mortality were seen across other countries suggesting that additional factors were at play (access to antibiotics, improvements in obstetric practice).

Reducing these deaths among infants requires a comprehensive, family-centered approach to safe sleep. Health care providers, early learning and public health professionals should work to engage caregivers in conversations about the following safe sleep recommendations:

- Always put your baby to sleep on his/her back on a firm sleep surface.
- Make sure no one smokes around your baby.
- Breastfeed your baby.
- Put your baby to sleep in the room where you sleep.
- Do not use pillows, blankets, stuffed toys or crib bumpers in your baby's sleep area.
- Do not place your baby to sleep on soft things like couches or upholstered chairs, quilts or comforters.
- Talk with grandparents and other caregivers about safe sleep.
- Offer a pacifier at nap time and bedtime. Wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier.
- Do not overheat or cover your baby's head.

Baby Box Considerations

- » **The American Academy of Pediatrics** has stated, “Currently, there is insufficient data on the role cardboard boxes play in reducing infant mortality.”
- » **The Consumer Product Safety Commission** urges caution because baby boxes are currently not subject to any required safety standards.
- » Several programs in the US are giving out baby boxes. The effects of these programs are being evaluated.

Sleep Related Deaths, 2015, Oregon

Category	
Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)	23
Accidental suffocation/strangulation in bed	18
Unknown	3
Total	44

Source: Oregon Vital Statistics

For more information on Safe Sleep including educational brochures and posters, go to: www.healthoregon.org/safesleep

Safe Sleep for Babies

Face up, face clear, smoke-free, baby near



Contact information:

Anna Stiefvater, RN, MPH
Perinatal Nurse Consultant
Anna.K.Stiefvater@state.or.us
971-673-1490

Oregon Health
Authority

PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Maternal and Child Health Section

Sleep-related infant deaths in Oregon and the US

There are about 40 Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUID) in babies less than 1 year old every year in Oregon (see table). The three commonly reported types of SUID are:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed (ASSB)
- Unknown cause.

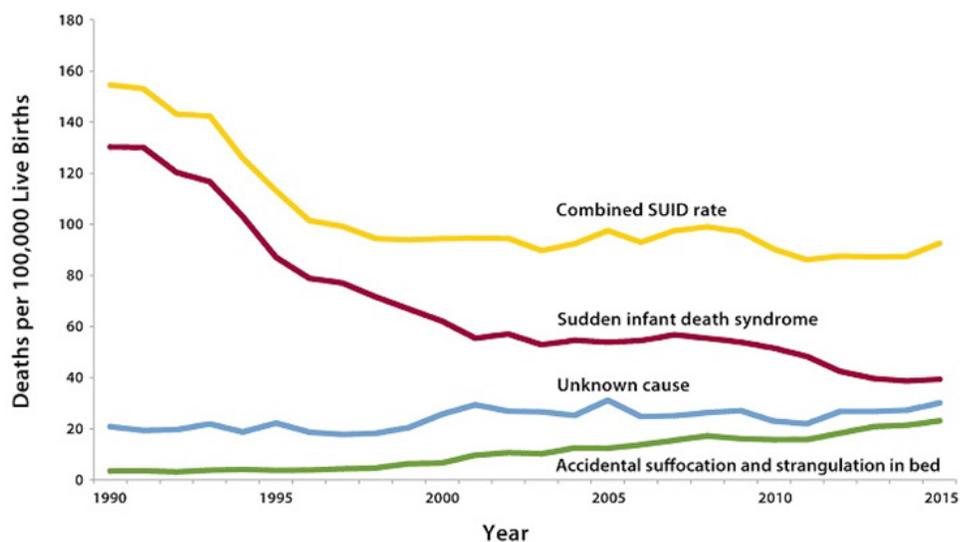
In the U.S, the SUID rate from 1990 – 2014 decreased (see graph) after the American Academy of Pediatrics released its safe sleep recommendations in 1992 and the Back to Sleep campaign began in 1994.

Significant differences exist between racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. SUID rates are consistently higher for American Indian/Alaska Native infants, followed by non-Hispanic black infants.

Infant deaths from accidental suffocation and strangulation in bed have been increasing since 1997. These deaths can be caused by:

- suffocation by soft bedding
- another person rolling on top of or against the infant while sleeping
- the baby getting wedged or trapped between two objects
- strangulation

Trends in Sudden Unexpected Infant Death by Causes, 1990-2015, US



Source: CDC/NCHS National Vital Statistics System