

Baby Gear and Sleeping: Know the Risks



Case Studies

A male, 3 months, was placed in a **bouncy seat**. Some time later, the child was found unresponsive with his face down and his head hanging over the top of the bouncy seat. The cause of death was positional asphyxia.

A female, 8 months, was secured in an infant **swing** by a shoulder harness and crotch strap and then left unattended for 20 minutes. The victim was taken to the hospital, but died soon after arrival. The cause of death was asphyxia/strangulation.

A female, 9 months, was left unattended in an infant **car seat** at a daycare facility. She was found entangled in the car seat harness. The cause of death was asphyxiation.

Infant Sleep Positioning, Healthy Childcare Iowa, 8/2008.



Car seats, swings, bouncy seats, etc. should not be used for sleeping. Infants need to be placed to sleep in furniture intended for sleeping.

Positional Asphyxia/Suffocation

Infants sleeping in a semi-sitting sleep position, such as in a car seat, bouncy seat, swing, etc. can die from positional asphyxiation. Positional asphyxiation is a type of suffocation that occurs when the infant's head falls forward and doesn't allow enough air into their lungs. This is a concern for infants as they have poor neck muscle strength, which forces the head to slouch forward pushing the infant's chin against his or her chest.

Strangulation

In addition to the improper positioning, strangulation is also a concern. The straps on these types of equipment can become wrapped around the infant if they wiggle around, or overturn the device.

If an infant falls asleep in one of these devices, they need to be transferred into a crib, bassinet, or Pack 'N Play.

Use Caution with Infant Slings

Infant slings can pose two types of suffocation hazards to babies. Very young infants have weak neck muscles. The slings fabric can press against their nose and mouth blocking the infant's ability to breathe and can cause suffocation within minutes.

Additionally, the curled position of the infant can cause their chin to push into their chest restricting airflow and eventually causes suffocation.

If you choose to use a sling with your infant, be sure to keep their face at or above the rim of the sling, free from fabric and obstructions. Make sure the infant is not curled and the chin doesn't touch the chest; frequently check on the infant.