Home apnea monitors for SIDs
When babies need them—and when they don’t

SIDS stands for sudden infant death syndrome. It is the sudden, unexplained death of an infant under one year old.

SIDS is rare, but parents worry a lot about it. It is more common in babies that were premature. There’s also more risk if you had another baby who died of SIDS.

Home apnea monitors track the breathing and heart rate of sleeping babies. An alarm goes off if a baby’s breathing stops briefly (apnea) or if the heart rate is unusually slow.

This monitor might sound like a good idea to concerned parents. But most newborns do not need a monitor. Here’s why:

**Home apnea monitors give little or no protection from SIDS.**

Research has not shown a clear link between apnea and SIDS. Even full-term newborns in the first few weeks of life may have brief periods of apnea. But this is not linked to SIDS.

**Monitors cause unnecessary worry.**

Home apnea monitors cause many false alarms. The noise can make parents worry too much and lose sleep.

Parents may actually feel more fear and anxiety if they often use medical equipment to check on their healthy baby.
One study found that parents of monitored infants said they felt more depressed, compared with parents of infants that weren’t monitored.

**There are better ways to protect babies against SIDS.**

There has been a lot of research on SIDS. Since the start of the “Back to Sleep” campaign in 1994, there have been half as many SIDS deaths in the U.S.

This campaign encourages two important steps to reduce the risk of SIDS:

- You should always put your baby to sleep on his or her back—not on the stomach.
- You should place your baby on a firm crib mattress close to your bed and keep pillows, blankets, bumpers, and stuffed animals out of the crib.

If your baby is on the back, she or he will be able to wake up much more easily. If the mattress is firm and there is no bedding around the baby, this decreases the chance of your baby having problems with not getting enough oxygen-rich fresh air. We know that many of these deaths occur when a baby is not getting enough oxygen and does not wake up. Following these two simple steps will help to protect your baby from that situation.

**When is a home apnea monitor a good idea?**

In rare cases, your doctor may recommend a home apnea monitor for your baby. The device may be needed if:

- Your baby needs home oxygen.
- Your baby has serious breathing problems.