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WITH WINTER WEATHER APPROACHING, THE ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES URGES PARENTS OF INFANTS TO PRACTICE SAFE SLEEP

Cold Weather Can Lead to Sleep Practices that Can Inadvertently Harm Infants, Such as Bedsharing and Using Loose Blankets

NEW YORK, NY – Today, as the cold weather nears, NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell urged parents and caregivers of infants to be especially mindful of safe sleep practices. Every year, approximately 50 babies in New York City tragically die due to sleep-related causes. With temperatures dropping, it is critical that parents avoid bringing babies or infants into their beds, or placing loose blankets and other materials in the infant's crib or sleep area. These seemingly natural acts can be dangerous, and at worst can lead to suffocation.

"As the weather gets colder, some parents may want to bring babies into bed with them or put blankets in cribs to keep babies warm – but these understandable actions can be harmful for babies," **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.** "Infant deaths related to unsafe sleep practices are preventable, and we are committed to continuing to educate families and caretakers about practices that can help keep babies safe."

Remember the **ABCs of Safe Sleep**: Infants should sleep **A**lone, on their **B**acks, in a safety-approved **C**rib. Below are the following ways in which families can create a safe sleep environment:

- **If you are worried about your baby getting cold, dress them in a wearable blanket, such as a sleep sack, or in another layer of infant clothing.** In general, your baby should be dressed in only one more layer than what you are wearing. If you have poor heating in your apartment and your landlord does not address the heating issue, call 311 for help.
- **Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any other items that could increase the risk of suffocation out of the baby's sleep area.** Loose and soft bedding can be very dangerous to a baby. Do not place pillows, blankets, toys, or bumper pads anywhere in your baby's sleep area. If one of those things gets on the baby's face, they may not be able to move their face away and can suffocate.
- **Avoid bedsharing.** A baby should never sleep in an adult bed, on a couch or on a chair with anyone. Babies may suffocate if another person accidentally rolls on top of them or covers their nose and mouth.

- **Babies should be placed on their backs to sleep.** Babies breathe better on their backs than on their stomachs or sides. Sleeping on their backs opens up their chests and makes it easier for them to draw in more oxygen to their brains. Babies who sleep on their sides can more easily roll onto their stomach, making it harder for them to breathe and increasing their risk of suffocation. Babies are also MORE likely to choke, if they spit up, when placed on their stomach.
- **Use a firm sleep surface with a fitted sheet made for that specific product.** Babies should be placed on a flat surface for all sleep times. Though it might seem more comfortable to put a pillow on top of the mattress, babies may suffocate on the soft surface. Do not use a car seat, carrier, swing, bouncer or similar product as a sleep area. These surfaces are not designed for a baby to sleep on and are very dangerous.
- **Keep your baby's crib free of any food or drink that may attract pests.** Crib netting may also provide some protection. For more on how to control pests safely, visit nyc.gov and search for "pests." If you have pest problems in your home and your landlord does not correct them, call 311 for help.
- **Breastfeed your baby.** Breastfeeding has many health benefits for mother and baby, including reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), also known as "crib death". While the cause of SIDS is unknown, breast milk may help build a baby's immune system to fight SIDS-related infections. Babies fed only breast milk get the most protection against SIDS. However, any breastfeeding provides more protection than no breastfeeding at all. Breastfeeding and skin-to-skin contact also keep babies calm and can help mothers bond with their babies and regulate their body temperatures, breathing and heart rate.

In 2015, the City took an important step in expanding and energizing its work to improve infant safe sleep practice among New York City residents by creating a dedicated Safe Sleep Team with outreach members focused in neighborhoods in high risk areas. In June 2018, ACS, the Department of Health, and NYC Health + Hospitals introduced the city's first-ever 'Safe Sleep Toolkit' for all new parents and caregivers at public hospitals across the city. The toolkit provides safe sleep resources such as a wearable blanket to keep the baby warm, an infant onesie, netting and educational materials about best practices for infant safe sleep. The toolkit includes a video to help debunk myths and misconceptions about sleep-related infant safety practices. View the full video here: [Breath of Life](#).

"As the winter months approach, we want to warn parents against putting loose blankets and bedding in their babies' cribs. While it might be a tempting way to keep the child warm, it can interfere with their breathing and suffocate them. To keep babies warm, they should be dressed in wearable blankets or another layer of infant clothing," said **Deputy Commissioner Lorelei A. Vargas**.

"All babies should have a safe and warm place to sleep, especially during the winter," said **Acting Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot**. "That's why we have been collaborating with Administration for Children's Services (ACS), Department of Homeless Services (DHS), NYC Health + Hospitals and community partners throughout the city to ensure all parents and infant caregivers have the knowledge, support and resources they need to place their babies safely to sleep for naps and at night. We want families to know we're here to help."

"It's an incredibly busy time of year, especially if you're a parent, but we all agree nothing is more important than keeping our babies safe," said **Assembly Member Amy Paulin**. "It's all too easy to fall into bad habits, and anyone might be confused by the well-meaning but

potentially misleading advice of others. It's absolutely worth a few minutes to review best practices for safe sleeping, particularly as winter begins."

"Safe sleep practices are critical to keeping our infants safe, especially during the winter when an innocent attempt to keep a child warm could lead to endangering their safety," said **Council Member Donovan Richards**. "As the proud father of a 3-year-old who loves to jump in bed with us at night, I know all about the parental instincts to keep our children close to us, but unfortunately our instincts aren't always right. I'd like to thank ACS Commissioner Hansell and Health Commissioner Barbot for spreading awareness about these essential tips to keeping our children safe during these cold winter nights."

"All of us want to keep our babies healthy and comfortable, especially as temperatures drop. Practices like avoiding loose bedding in the crib, and breastfeeding when possible, can help us do just that. Thank you Administration for Children's Services for sharing these incredibly helpful and potentially lifesaving tips," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal**, Chair of the Committee on Women.

For more information on infant safe sleep best practices or resources in your community, visit: www.nyc.gov/safesleep or call 311 and ask for Safe Sleep.

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