



Travis County Medical Examiner

Sept. 29, 2014

Travis County infant suffocation deaths highlight need for October Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month

This year, Travis County has seen 10 infant suffocation deaths, including nine associated with the risk factor of bed-sharing. The alarming increase in infant deaths already surpasses the last two years' totals—nine in 2012 and eight in 2013. From 2008 to Sept. 8, 2014, data reveals 84 infants died of accidental suffocation in Travis County alone. The numbers are grim for Texas, too, with a total of 842 infant sleep-related deaths, including the diagnoses of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Accidental Suffocation and Strangulation in Bed (ASSB) from 2009 to 2011.

In an effort to help reduce infant deaths, Governor Rick Perry, the Travis County Medical Examiner's Office and Safe Kids Austin recognize October as Infant Safe Sleep Awareness Month and hope that parents and child caregivers recognize the importance of creating safe sleep environments for infants year round.

The American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendations to increase safety for sleeping babies are simple and as easy as A-B-C. Babies should sleep:

- **Alone:** Bed-sharing, which is sleeping with a baby on a bed, couch, floor or in a chair, is dangerous. Babies should sleep alone, not with an adult, child or animal. Room sharing with a baby is a better way to sleep near your little one.
- **On their Back:** Not on their side or tummy. Place babies on their back for every sleep time, including naps and at night.
- **In a safety-approved Crib:** Put babies on a firm surface, preferably a safety-approved crib with a firm crib mattress covered by a fitted sheet. Do not use bedding material, such as bumper pads, pillows, blankets or clutter, such as soft toys or stuffed animals. (Safety approved bassinets, play yards and portable cribs are acceptable).

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the leading cause of all infant accidental deaths is suffocation and strangulation in bed, not the more publicized causes of death,

--MORE--

such as traffic fatalities and drowning. Together, we can reduce this cause of infant death and stop the silent killer—dangerous sleep environments that result in suffocation.

For more information contact, Leanne Courtney, Travis County Medical Examiner's Office Forensic Nurse, at 512-854-4425. Information about this and other safe-living topics is also at: www.TravisCountyTX.gov/Medical_Examiner.

###

Submitted by: Travis County Emergency Services PIO Lisa Block, 512-854-7954