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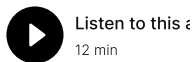
HEALTH CONDITIONS

Study of 208 Infant Deaths Highlights 'Unsafe' Sleep — But Omits Key Data on Vaccination Status

Cook County, Illinois, recorded 208 sudden unexpected infant deaths from 2019 to 2023. A new analysis of the deaths focused heavily on sleep environments, concluding that "unsafe" sleeping was largely to blame. But what other conditions could account for the alarming rate? And what data did the researchers ignore or exclude?

by [Henrick Karoliszyn, DSW \(https://childrenshealthdefense.org/authors/henrick-karoliszyn-dsw/\)](https://childrenshealthdefense.org/authors/henrick-karoliszyn-dsw/)

JULY 7, 2026



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While [infant mortality in the U.S. \(https://apnews.com/article/infant-mortality-cdc-d0da666b52330ba91accf25e0c62c22\)](https://apnews.com/article/infant-mortality-cdc-d0da666b52330ba91accf25e0c62c22) has fallen to historic lows, a [new analysis of infant deaths in Illinois \(https://www.rush.edu/sites/default/files/media-documents/suid-report.pdf\)](https://www.rush.edu/sites/default/files/media-documents/suid-report.pdf), most populous county paints a grim picture: Between 2019 and 2023, more than 200 babies died unexpectedly.

The analysis, which focused on sleeping conditions, reinforces decades of public messaging that infants should be [placed on their backs to sleep \(https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov\)](https://safetosleep.nichd.nih.gov), on a firm, flat mattress free of pillows, blankets or other soft objects.

But a closer reading of the report raises new concerns: Does focusing on sleep environments capture the full picture behind the deaths?

The Cook County Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) Case Registry documented 208 sudden unexpected infant deaths between 2019 and 2023. Researchers found that 99% of the infants were sleeping in conditions that did not meet recommended safe sleep guidelines.

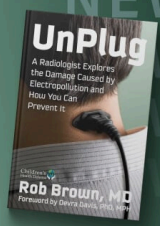
Nearly two-thirds of the infants were sharing a sleep surface with another person when they died, while approximately 90% were sleeping with, on or near soft bedding.

Those findings mirror decades of recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(https://www.cdc.gov/sudden-infant-death/sleep-safety/index.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/sudden-infant-death/sleep-safety/index.html) (CDC) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/\)](https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/safe-sleep/) (AAP), which continue to emphasize safe sleep practices as the most effective strategy for reducing preventable sleep-related infant deaths.

Yet deeper within the report are findings that point to a much more complicated picture.

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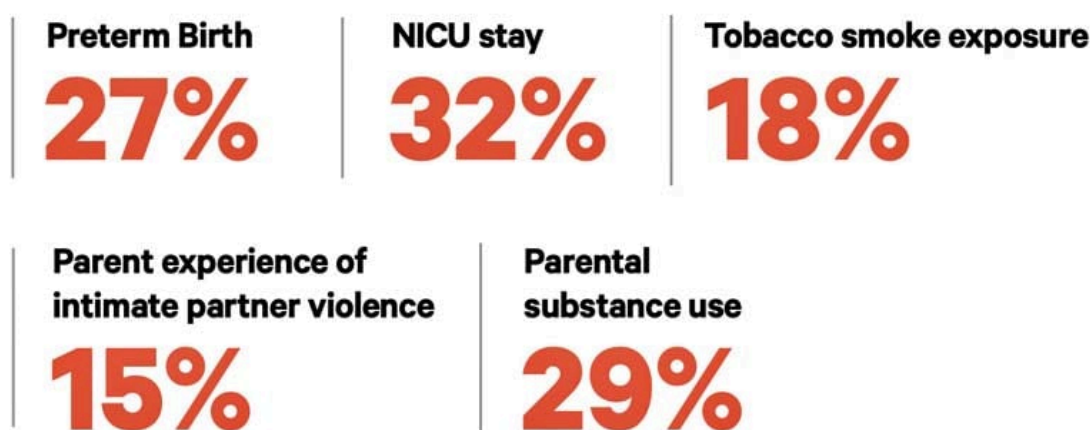
What else did babies have in common?

More than one-quarter of the infants in [the study \(https://www.rush.edu/sites/default/files/media-documents/suid-report.pdf\)](https://www.rush.edu/sites/default/files/media-documents/suid-report.pdf) were born prematurely, and nearly one-third had spent time in a neonatal intensive care unit after birth.

Almost 1 in 5 had documented tobacco smoke exposure. Fifteen percent had a parent who had experienced intimate partner violence, and 29% came from families with a history of substance use.

Sleep-Related Infant Deaths (208)

Percentages of sleep-related infant death that occurred among infants with a history of:



Source: The Cook County SUID Case Registry.

Meanwhile, nearly 1 in 6 infants died while temporarily away from their usual home. Those temporary arrangements often lacked a crib, and investigators noted that some cases were associated with housing instability.

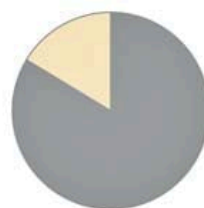
Temporary Stays (34)

1 in 6

infants died while temporarily away from their usual home.

- These infants were older than infants who died in their usual home.
- They were less likely to be under their mother's care.
- They were less likely to have a crib available at the time of their death.

Temporary stay: 34
 Usual home: 174



	Usual Home	Temporary Stay
Peak Age		
Non-Hispanic Black infants	121 (70%)	32 (94%)
Caregiver: Mother	125 (72%)	14 (41%)
Caregiver: Non-parent relative*	9 (5%)	9 (35%)
No crib available**	42 (29%)	17 (59%)

*For infants under supervision of a relative; this variable was known for 171 'usual home' sleep-related infant deaths and 26 'temporary stay' sleep-related infant deaths.

**Crib availability was known for 144 'usual home' sleep-related infant deaths and 29 'temporary stay' sleep-related infant deaths.

All statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$)

Source: The Cook County SUID Case Registry.

Ten of the 13 families had prior involvement with child welfare agencies, and nearly half of the infants were being cared for by someone other than a parent when they died.

Black infants died at rates 14 times higher than white babes

While **SUID rates** (<https://www.cdc.gov/sudden-infant-death/data-research/data/suid-rates-by-race-ethnicity.html>) have declined since the 1990s, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist, according to the CDC.

The Cook County study highlighted such stark racial imbalances. Black infants died at rates 14 times higher than white infants, while Hispanic infants died at rates 2.3 times higher.

Michele Spikes-Cain, associate director of nursing for the **Cook County Department of Public Health** (<https://cookcountypublichealth.org>), told **The Defender** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/>) these figures reflect differences in healthcare access, housing, economic opportunity, caregiver support and other social determinants of health rather than race itself.

"Addressing these systemic factors is essential to improving outcomes," Spikes-Cain added. "Sleep-related infant deaths remain a significant public health concern."

Rush University Medical Center (<https://www.rush.edu/news/most-sudden-infant-deaths-involve-unsafe-sleep>) pediatrician Dr. Gina Lowell, who leads the SUID Case Registry in Chicago, echoed these sentiments.

"Such disparities are driven by inequitable access to resources that support health and safety for families," she said.

SIDS 'leaves families with more questions than answers'

The findings come as national infant mortality statistics continue moving in the opposite direction.

The CDC defines SUID (<https://www.cdc.gov/sudden-infant-death/about/index.html>) as the sudden, unexpected death of an infant younger than age 1. This broad umbrella definition includes SIDS, accidental suffocation or strangulation in bed, and deaths from unknown causes.

SIDS is defined (<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/about/sids.html>) as an unexpected death before age 1 with its cause unknown "even after a complete investigation."

SIDS is the **third leading cause of death among infants** (<https://www.cdc.gov/maternal-infant-health/infant-mortality/index.html>), after birth defects and prematurity, but the medical industry remains unsure of its underlying causes.

Dr. Lindsey Wimmer (https://starlegacyfoundation.org/?board_members=lindsey-wimmer), founder and executive director of Star Legacy Foundation, an organization that provides support and advocacy related to pregnancy loss and neonatal death, said SIDS is particularly catastrophic because "exact causes are unknown."

Wimmer said though room-sharing without bed-sharing until the baby is 6 months old and avoiding smoke exposure can help prevent SIDS, its inherent triggers remain mysterious.

X

"SIDS is a devastating event that leaves families with more questions than answers," she told The Defender.

Researchers and public health officials describe SIDS as a complex **condition** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/category/health-conditions/>) with multiple contributing factors. **Christina Parks, Ph.D.** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/public-support-vaccines-declines-health-freedom/>), said immune response can play a role in the death of some babies.

"When an infant's body lacks key anti-inflammatory nutrients and antioxidants, acute immune activation from illness or other stressors may overwhelm the body's ability to regulate inflammation," Parks said. "This inflammation may affect areas of the brainstem involved in breathing and heart rate."

U.S. infant mortality rate still higher than most high-income countries

The **category for SIDS** (<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/481278>) was not initiated until the late 1960s after a sudden rise in unexplained infant deaths. The World Health Organization's **International Classification of Diseases** (<https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/classification-of-diseases>) (ICD) eventually **assigned the code in 1971** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/media-slam-nih-axing-safe-to-sleep-campaign-evidence-program-never-reduced-sids-deaths/>).

In 2022, approximately 3,700 U.S. infants died from SUID, including 1,529 deaths classified as SIDS, **according to the CDC** (<https://www.cdc.gov/sudden-infant-death/data-research/data/index.html>).

According to provisional federal data released by the [National Center for Health Statistics](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/index.html>), the [U.S. infant mortality rate](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr042.pdf) (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr042.pdf>) hit a record low in 2024 at 5.52 deaths per 1,000 live births, essentially unchanged from 2023.

The report found an 8% decline in SIDS, from 40.2 to 37.0 deaths per 100,000 live births, along with a 5% drop in postneonatal mortality and a 5% decline in mortality among full-term infants.

While the second straight year without an overall increase marks continued stability, [the U.S. infant mortality rate remains substantially higher than those of many other high-income countries](https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2026-06-22/u-s-infant-mortality-rate-drops-but-still-trails-other-nations) (<https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2026-06-22/u-s-infant-mortality-rate-drops-but-still-trails-other-nations>).

Can vaccines trigger SIDS? The debate continues

The Cook County analysis did not include vaccination data. The report did not ask, among those infants who died, how many received vaccinations, which vaccinations they received, and how recently they received them.

Questions about a [possible link between routine childhood vaccinations and SIDS](https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/exclusive-sen-ron-johnson-demands-journal-turn-over-records-related-sids-vaccines-study/) (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/exclusive-sen-ron-johnson-demands-journal-turn-over-records-related-sids-vaccines-study/>) have resurfaced following a renewed inquiry by [Sen. Ron Johnson](https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/2026/06/30/chairman-johnson-requests-information-from-medical-journal-on-removal-of-article-on-sudden-infant-death-syndrome-and-vaccines/) (<https://www.ronjohnson.senate.gov/2026/06/30/chairman-johnson-requests-information-from-medical-journal-on-removal-of-article-on-sudden-infant-death-syndrome-and-vaccines/>) (R-Wis.) into the withdrawal of a 2021 peer-reviewed paper by researcher [Neil Z. Miller](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214750021001268) (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2214750021001268>).

Johnson has asked the publisher of Toxicology Reports, Elsevier, to explain the decision, following a similar request by [U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/2066551769006538847) (<https://x.com/SecKennedy/status/2066551769006538847>).

[Miller's research](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8255173/) (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8255173/>) analyzed reports submitted to the federal Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System ([VAERS](https://vaers.hhs.gov) (<https://vaers.hhs.gov>)) identifying 2,989 reports of infant deaths in VAERS occurring within 60 days of vaccination from 1990 to 2019.

Separately, researchers recently published a hypothesis paper in the [International Journal of Medical Sciences](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12080585/) (<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12080585/>) suggesting that genetic differences affecting infant metabolism could merit additional research into immune responses to vaccine components. The authors emphasized that further large-scale studies would be necessary to evaluate their hypothesis.

Concerns about vaccines and SIDS have circulated for decades. In a [2008 Age of Autism column](https://ageofautism.com/by-dan-olmsted/) (<https://ageofautism.com/by-dan-olmsted/>), journalist Dan Olmsted cited a [1979 internal Wyeth \(now Pfizer\) memorandum](https://fearlessparent.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Wyeth-1979-Hot-Lots-Memo.pdf) (<https://fearlessparent.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Wyeth-1979-Hot-Lots-Memo.pdf>) describing changes in distribution of DTP (or [DTaP](https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/dtap.pdf) (<https://www.immunize.org/wp-content/uploads/vis/dtap.pdf>)) vaccine lots following reports of infant deaths in Tennessee. X

Olmsted argued the policy appeared intended to avoid "correlations being drawn between DPT vaccine lot numbers and SIDS deaths."

Olmsted also cited "[A Shot in the Dark](https://archive.org/details/shotindarkwhyin00coul) (<https://archive.org/details/shotindarkwhyin00coul>)," a book that suggested that a cluster of infant deaths following vaccination warranted greater investigation. However, [several studies](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234368/) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234368/>) have concluded there was no evidence to support such a causal association.

In a June 2025 Substack commentary, [Dr. Pierre Kory](https://pierrekorymedicalmusings.com/p/medical-record-review-of-the-twins) (<https://pierrekorymedicalmusings.com/p/medical-record-review-of-the-twins>) posited that routine childhood [vaccines](https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender-category/toxic-exposures/vaccines-toxic-exposures/) (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender-category/toxic-exposures/vaccines-toxic-exposures/>) may cause substantially more infant deaths than public health agencies acknowledge, relying primarily on reports submitted to the federal VAERS system, historical claims about SIDS and criticism of federal vaccine-benefit estimates.

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AAP rejects link between SIDS, vaccines

Meanwhile, the AAP maintains that routine **childhood vaccinations are not associated** (<https://www.aap.org/en/news-room/fact-checked/fact-checked-there-is-no-link-between-vaccines-and-sudden-infant-death/>) with an increased risk of SIDS, noting that infants receive several vaccines during the same period when SIDS is most common, which can lead to concerns about a possible connection.

"While it's natural for parents to be concerned about their baby and fearful of sudden infant death, claims about a link to vaccines are false," the AAP materials claim. "Extensive research and scientific review have found no evidence that vaccines cause sudden infant death."

Public health agencies also note that SIDS rates declined substantially after the **"Back to Sleep" campaign** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK513376/>), promoting safe infant sleep positions and that numerous studies have not found a causal relationship between recommended childhood vaccinations and SIDS.

However, pediatric research published in several medical journals asserts that the campaign did not lead to a dramatic **reduction in SIDS deaths** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/media-slam-nih-axing-safe-to-sleep-campaign-evidence-program-never-reduced-sids-deaths/>).

Cook County health officials say continued efforts should focus on safe sleep education, expanded prenatal and postpartum care, nurse home-visiting programs and addressing social and economic conditions associated with infant mortality.

"Every infant death is a tragedy for families and communities," Spikes-Cain said. "Continued collaboration among healthcare providers, public **health** (https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender_category/policy/) agencies, hospitals and community organizations is essential to ensuring families receive the education, resources and support they need to promote infant safety."

Related articles in The Defender

- **Breaking: Mother of Twins Who Died 8 Days After Vaccinations Charged With Murder** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/andrea-shaw-idaho-mother-twins-died-8-days-after-vaccinations-charged-murder/>).
- **Exclusive: Sen. Ron Johnson Demands Journal Turn Over Records Related to SIDs and Vaccines Study** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/exclusive-sen-ron-johnson-demands-journal-turn-over-records-related-sids-vaccines-study/>) x
- **Louisiana Lawmakers Move to Analyze Data on Vaccines and SIDS** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/community/louisiana-lawmakers-bills-sids-vaccine-history-autopsies-grieving-parents/>).
- **8-Week-Old Dies of SIDS One Day After 'Routine' Vaccines — Were the Shots to Blame?** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/8-week-old-dies-sids-one-day-after-routine-vaccines-were-shots-blame/>).
- **11-Week-Old 'Anna' Died Hours After Her 'Routine' Vaccines. Nearly 12 Years Later, a Court Ruled the Vaccines Killed Her** (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/11-week-old-anna-sims-died-routine-vaccines-family-wins-vicp-settlement/>).

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Henrick Karoliszyn, DSW (<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/authors/henrick-karoliszyn-dsw/>)

Henrick Karoliszyn, DSW, is an investigative reporter for The Defender.

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Clare Goldsberry

10 days ago

It seems to me (I haven't researched it yet) that SIDS began to be publicized and the "safe sleep" warning propaganda started about the time that the PREP act was initiated and the number of vaccines kept increasing to some ungodly number beginning at birth. When my children were born (early 1970s) I was told by the doctor not to vaccinate them too early, but wait until they were about 2-3 years old as it was safer by giving their immune systems time to develop. Think of all these poor parents whose babies might have died from the vaccine but who were told they did not practice "safe sleep" methods. None of us reared in the 1950s and 60s ever heard of "safe sleep" -- putting children on their backs -- to keep them from suffocating. I always put my babies on their stomach as they slept better and they all grew up to healthy individuals. Personally, IMHO, I think this whole thing of "safe sleep" to prevent SIDS is just another cover to shift the blame from Big pHarma to the parents. SHAME on Big pHarma!!

16

0

Reply 



drw22

→ Clare Goldsberry

10 days ago

Exactly. If the baby's not sleeping on his back or the bed is too soft, they can blame the parent and not the vaccine.

4

0

Reply 

A

Alan Sterry

→ Clare Goldsberry

10 days ago

Good to hear that there really was a time when doctors could give advice based on their experiences. In the UK all we have now are protocol puppets who are not allowed to think, or if they do they fear speaking of anything other than 'the narrative'. When AI takes over medical care will we notice the difference ?

2

0

Reply 

D

diane

10 days ago

How do you keep a baby asleep on its back once they start rolling over? I think the main culprit is vaccines. Babies' immune systems are not developed, and we inject them with toxins? Doesn't make sense to me.

13

0

Reply 



elevencav

10 days ago

And AGAIN the AAP lies. Even the inserts state that a side effect of vaccines is sudden death. And the MMR causes, AT MINIMUM, 42 times the number of deaths that measles does.

13

0

Reply 

B

BB

→ elevencav

5 days ago

The AAP has financial ties to Big Pharma. They cannot be trusted at all.

0

0

Reply 

H

holisticpoet

10 days ago

It is my personal opinion that SIDS rates fell significantly during the plandemic due to children not making their well baby visit. There is no information that I could find in my search to verify this position. I do know however that Big Tech has partnered with big pharma in disseminating only the information that they want the public to be able to attain.

I contend that it plummeted before the jab came out and only went up after pregnant woman took the Covid19 jab and had their compromised infants.

9 0 Reply

A

Alan Sterry

→ holisticpoet

10 days ago

The Highwire once reported on data from Mark Blaxhill (?) showing a collapse in sudden baby deaths (almost to zero). This was around the time that mums couldn't get their babies into the 'well baby' clinics for their jabs. Whatever happened to that research?

6 0 Reply



BarbaraCharis

10 days ago

Why are so infants dying in America? Our educational system should teach children health and nutrition information starting in first grade. Many Americans know nothing about health. However, our government knows nothing about health either. It promotes industries before the people. It permits the industries to do their own research and testing. It has lowered the mental and physical health of most Americans radically in the last 75 years, because of its focus on money. It has put America behind the eight ball...with its dependency on a Medical Industry that promotes toxic drugs and vaccines, and a Processed Food Industry whose no-nutrient products produce unhealthy people. The results are apparent: Many Americans are obese and spend more on medical drugs and treatments than any other country in the world with the worst results. Americans mental health has been affected too, because they have no idea that the wrong foods and substances destroy their brains and the ability to think clearly. They have no idea how their own bodies work. They know more about caring for their automobiles than their own bodies. People need to wake up and take responsibility for their own health...and not let the foxes guard the chicken coops.

6 0 Reply



drw22

10 days ago

I don't understand the sleeping on the back thing. When I had my babies, the accepted position was to place the baby on his/her stomach. That way, if he vomited in his sleep, the vomit would drain from his mouth and not block the airways. It makes sense to me.

My grandkids were born in the sleep on back era. The firstborn hated sleeping on her back. At six weeks, she started lifting her legs and dropping them to the side, rolling herself onto her side every time.

5 0 Reply



Wendy

→ drw22

10 days ago edited

Smart girl. I don't remember what I did as a baby, but I cannot sleep on my stomach or back, mainly due to allergies. I sleep on my side (either one). Also, I put my son on his side too when he was a baby. He is 37 now and fine.

2 0 Reply



r2bzjudge

8 days ago

SIDS is defined as an unexpected death before age 1 with its cause unknown "even after a complete investigation."

After a complete scamination. With 58% of SIDS occurring within 3 days after a vaccination, they aren't doing a complete examination. It's a coverup.

2 0 Reply



Wendy

→ r2bzjudge

8 days ago

Without an autopsy, is just lies and conjecture. This is obviously not science. We must insist on autopsies! Otherwise, one cannot make any conclusion as to cause.

2 0 Reply

B

BB

→ Wendy

5 days ago

AND the proper blood tests.

0 0 Reply

M

Mary Schneider

9 days ago

I wonder how many of the babies in this study were breastfed and how many were on formula, which lacks vital nutrients. Also, breastfeeding usually requires the mother to get up at night a few times to feed the baby, which means she is checking in on the baby.

2 0 Reply



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With Little Oversight

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...and the money, the power, and the lives are ready to begin a new chapter, a new chapter.

Big Pharma (Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, etc.) still market their poisonous mRNA jabs as though we haven't noticed the immediate and sometimes long term consequences.

Big Pharma still hide behind the 1986 PREP Act to avoid LIABILITY for the devastation that their deadly injections have caused and continue to cause. Still reaping their fortunes by bribing those who should be questioning this world Depopulation Program.

It's time to remind those who fell 'hook, line and sinker' story of the most deadly medical lie in world history.

We must all keep spreading the truth to the few that still trust the establishment and the Big Pharma henchmen in the media and medical professions.

Unjabbed Mick (We live longer!)

0 0 Reply 



5 days ago

Sleeping on their back leaves a baby vulnerable to choking on their own regurgitated food They should be placed on their sides in recovery position with their heads slightly elevated.!

0 0 Reply



Wendy

8 days ago edited

I see no mention of autopsy in these deaths. Without a full and complete autopsy, one cannot say what caused any of these deaths. This is unacceptable and medical malpractice. One must insist upon a full and complete autopsy, including a full and complete toxicology panel (testing). Know that you do not have to accept the government's autopsy results. You can hire a pathologist and have your own autopsy done. I did this for my father. I could only afford a brain autopsy and drug screen. It confirmed Alzheimer's disease and the presence of phenobarbital (allegedly for epilepsy, although my father had not needed drugs for this for many years). My conclusion is that my father was mistreated and actually almost died 3 times in care facilities, which brought back his epilepsy. For Alzheimers help, see <https://www.apollohealthco.com/book/the-end-of-alzheimers/> and other books and information by Dr. Dale Bredeesen. My dad died before this information was available, but now everyone can access it.

0 0 Reply

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