

LA LECHE LEAGUE INTERNATIONAL AND CO-SLEEPING EXPERT FIND STUDY TO BE INACCURATE

Schaumburg, IL (September 30, 1999) - La Leche League International (LLL), the world's foremost authority on breastfeeding, questioned the results of a recent study published in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine which refers to co-sleeping as an unsafe practice for families.

Studies have shown that co-sleeping with a breastfeeding infant promotes bonding, regulates the mother and baby's sleep patterns, plays a role in helping the mother to become more responsive to her baby's cues, and gives both the mother and baby needed rest. The co-sleeping environment also assists mothers in the continuation of breastfeeding on demand, an important step in maintaining the mother's milk supply.

Dr. James McKenna, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Notre Dame, a member of LLL's Health Advisory Council, and an expert on the subject of co-sleeping, believes there to be more danger in leaving an infant alone in a crib than in arranging a safe co-sleeping environment. He states, "We agree with the authors and others that special precautions need to be taken to minimize catastrophic accidents. However, the need for such precautions is no more an argument against all co-sleeping and, specifically bedsharing, than is the reality of infants accidentally strangling, suffocating, or dying from SIDS alone in cribs, a reason to recommend against all solitary, unsupervised infant sleep." He adds, "While specific structural hazards of an adult bed are important, the fact that they exist means neither that they cannot be eliminated nor that all bed-sharing is unsafe." Dr. McKenna also considers the conclusions and recommendations of the study to be inappropriate because the authors based their findings on incomplete and anecdotal evidence rather than hard scientific data.

Dr. McKenna believes that co-sleeping can be a positive experience for a breastfeeding family and should not be considered dangerous if parents institute the following safeguards:

- Parents should not sleep with their babies if they are smokers or have ingested alcohol or drugs.
- Bedding should be tight fitting to the mattress.
- The mattress should be tight fitting to the headboard of the bed.
- There should not be any loose pillows or soft blankets near the baby's face.
- There should not be any space between the bed and adjoining wall where the baby could roll and become trapped.
- The baby should not be placed on its stomach or side.

La Leche League International offers mother-to-mother support, education, and information in 66 countries, and 28 languages, around the world. In addition, LLLI offers a variety of additional educational programs for medical professionals, as well as publishing and selling books and magazines about breastfeeding and parenting. LLLI also maintains an award-winning Web site at www.lalecheleague.org.