

THE LITTLE LINEN COMPANY AUSTRALIA

by Ben Wilson (Managing Director)

Why is 'Soft' So Very Hard for New Parents When Buying for Baby?

As new parents, we want everything for baby to be perfect – and one of the key phrases you'll hear often is 'soft'. Babies are so precious that we even talk about wanting to wrap them in cotton wool!

A soft and kind disposition, soft lighting, soft voices, soft colours, soft steps, things that feel soft and comfortable, it's ok to feel a bit confused when trying to decipher the many meanings of the word 'soft' when buying products for your little ones. For us at Little Linen, soft is a catch-all for describing what is good about many baby products – we even refer to our market segment as 'soft textiles'.

However, did you know that soft is not always best for babies?

We are very grateful to have input on this topic from a leading expert in the field, Mike Leshner, former President of the National Academy of Forensic Engineers.

Soft can in fact be a hazard for baby.

Mike says: 'We all know about the suffocation hazard posed by a thin plastic bag that can conform to a child's face and block airflow. That kind of suffocation is easy to understand, and we all know to keep plastic bags away from children. Re-breathing is a different kind of suffocation and is more difficult to understand. Babies are designed very well to prevent suffocation in most situations.

However, when an infant's face is in contact with a thick material that is either pillowy or fluffy soft that conforms to the shape of their face creating a seal, hazardous rebreathing can occur. An infant can continue breathing greater and greater concentrations of their own exhaled breath, known as carbon dioxide re-breathing.



Outside the cot, there are a range of other potentially hazardous products that could also provide pillowy or fluffy soft surfaces including carriers, car-seats, loungers, slings, swings, bouncing devices and play yards. Parents must be vigilant to assure that there will be no opportunity for the baby to get their face pressed against them.'

Don't put anything in the cot/crib but the baby.

When it comes to safety inside the cot/crib, Mike's message is clear. In the early months, infants placed on their back will tend to stay where you place them in the cot. Once they begin to move around and roll over, their face may come into contact with anything in the cot including the mattress, side rails, head and footboard and any items placed inside. Examples of hazardous items inside a cot/crib that can conform to a baby's face include quilts, pillows, sheepskin, plush stuffed animals, foam, bumpers and even things that make a sleep surface too pillowy or fluffy soft.

Baby's sleep surface, including bedding, needs to be firm and flat.

We know it can often be hard for adults to understand that what is best for us is not also best for baby. We want soft and comfy to sleep on for ourselves; however, all globally recognised advocates and authorities agree that baby's sleep surface, including bedding, needs to be firm and flat.

Did you know there is a standard for sleep surface firmness here in Australia? If a sleep surface does not pass this standard, it increases the risk of SIDS three-fold. The firmness testing device is called a Firmometer and was created by Ron Somers, one of the lead authors.



In February 2021, Red Nose announced the following warning: 'If a waterproof mattress protector were to be soft/padded and reduced the firmness of a cot mattress, then the sleep environment may be 'unsafe' & the mattress protector should be avoided.'

Our safety recommendations:

- Do not add any pillowy soft or fluffy soft toppers, protectors, padding, quilts, sheepskins, blankets and bulky extra layers above or below the bed linen on a cot mattress
 - Only use well-fitting mattress protectors and fitted sheets
- If unsure if your surface is firm enough, get crafty and go online and make a home testing kit. By searching 'how to measure cot firmness', you will find a number of resources that will help you with this.

The key thing for parents to remember is to be mindful of what they put into their baby's sleep space. This includes the mattress itself as well as any layers of bedding or additional furnishings.

Just remember – your baby is the ONLY thing that should be placed inside your cot.

For more information please visit www.littlelinen.com



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