

Meet the EXPERT



M&B' panellist **Sonali Shivlani** is an Internationally Certified Pregnancy Consultant and a child nutrition counsellor. She is the executive director of CAPPA India, and also trains aspiring birth professionals to achieve certification in pregnancy, birth and lactation counselling.

As a new parent, you will have many apprehensions and concerns, but the most important is the safety of your little one. You may think that a little baby sleeping on the bed all the time cannot really be unsafe, but here are some things that you should be watchful of.

Sleep Safety: There are many sleeping arrangements that you may be thinking of for your little one. From co-sleeping to having a separate room, the choice is really yours. However, here are some things that you should be aware of. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics Safe Sleep Recommendations, it is important for all healthy, full-term babies to be placed to sleep on their back. Sharing the bed with your baby, although convenient, is not recommended. You could consider room sharing, which means that your baby is in the same room with you but on a different bed. This will make breastfeeding convenient as well. Choose a firm mattress for the crib, and ensure that no sheets or blankets are loose. There should be no soft toys or even loose bumpers as part of your infant's bed.

Heat Safety: It is our instinct to bundle up our babies. We have swaddles, caps,

Safety for your newborn

socks, mittens and then blankets. All of these can cause overheating. Babies can actually enjoy a temperature of about 24 to 26 degrees Celsius, with normal layers of clothing. Overheating has been listed as one of the major causes of SIDS, which is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Bath Safety: Bathing is a fun time but can also be a cause for concern if not handled safely. One of the most important things is to never leave your baby unattended in the bath. Always organise all the items you need, and then bring in the baby for a bath. The water temperature should feel tepid to the elbow. Excessively hot water can result in scalding and burns. Avoid using products which have not been tried and tested on the baby as these can result in allergies. Even though a tub bath may look very attractive, it is always safer to bathe the newborn using a bucket and a tumbler.

Feeding Safety: If you are breastfeeding your baby, you may want to remain alert while feeding. If you lie down and feed, you may fall asleep and you could create a choking hazard. If you are bottle feeding, never leave the baby alone with the bottle. Even though it may seem like a super convenient option, it can result in a choking hazard.

Equipment Safety: We buy a lot of products for our little one, from prams to strollers, from cots to carry cots, from car seats to rockers. Check the product guidelines very carefully, and always use them as directed. Do not use the product for any other use except the indicated one. You may also want to check all the reviews before you make a purchase. All authentic products which are available in the market have to



undergo stringent safety checks, and you should always pick brands which adhere to these safety standards. Check if there have been any product recalls, as these could also pose to be a safety hazard.

Handling Safety: Last but not the least, this is a very broad area. But it's also very easy to explain. Always respect your baby in terms of handling. When playing with your baby or making the baby do some exercises, listen to the baby's cues. The baby will tell you if he or she is not enjoying the actions. Do not exert unnecessary pressure. Do not push the limbs more than the natural stretch. Overdoing certain actions could cause injuries.

Your baby is a precious gift. Keeping your baby safe is one of the most important ways that you show love for your little one. **MB**