

Studies Link Crib Death To Toxic Mold In Mattresses And Bedding

-- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is something all new parents worry about and while numerous risk factors have been cited by the medical community, there may be one not making headlines in the United States. --

GAINESVILLE, FL, April 08, 2009 -- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome is one of the leading causes of death among infants in the United States and there are a number of different things that are speculated to lead to its occurrence, including sleeping positions, low birth weight, tobacco smoke exposure, and premature birth. While these have all been identified as being risk factors, there is one thing that many parents are not aware of that could also be a risk: the baby's mattress.

Statistically, according to Dr. Jim Sprott, scientist and chemist from New Zealand, the risk for SIDS rises from the first child to the second and again to the third and so on. Many families with more than one child use the same baby mattress over and over and some families who cannot afford a new mattress for their first child will purchase a used mattress or acquire a used one from close family. And the reason for this being significant is startling, since it involves the very chemicals added to those mattresses designed to keep our children safe from fire.

Dr. Sprott states that SIDS most certainly is caused by toxic gases that are produced

by mold growth within a baby's mattress. Mold growth is caused in these mattresses when liquids such as milk, juice, and urine are spilled onto them, bedding, and stuffed animals and even though mold is a health risk around infants by itself, it gets worse. Since the 1950's, the government has mandated that there be fire retardant chemicals such as phosphorus, arsenic, and antimony added to the mattresses and when the mold begins to feed on wet mattress material, it releases toxic gases through the sheets for the infant to inhale.

The crib death prevention campaign in New Zealand continues to this day, because parents have been encouraged throughout that country to wrap their baby mattresses in a specially made polyethylene cover. They have also been encouraged to not use bedding that is made with fire retardant additives and to be aware that new baby mattresses are safer by default because they have not been exposed to water and other liquids that cause mold growth. Since the mattress-wrapping campaign began, New Zealand has gone from having one of the highest SIDS rates in the world in 1994 (2 in every 1,000 live births) to having that rate reduced by 70%. According to Dr. Sprott, the only change in New Zealand's stance on SIDS since 1994 has been to warn parents to wrap their infant's mattresses and as such, the decline in SIDS occurrences throughout New Zealand cannot be due to mainstream SIDS prevention advice.

So, why aren't parents being told to wrap their mattresses in the United States? Stating that the very chemicals added to mattresses to keep us safe from fire could be a risk would be the government admitting a huge responsibility in the deaths of thousands of infants. For the medical research community in the United States, SIDS is a large source of funding. In New Zealand, however, funding for SIDS research has screeched to almost a halt since parents are discovering just how inexpensive wrapping a baby's mattress and investing in organic bedding materials can be when compared to the heartbreak of losing a child.

While mainstream SIDS research organizations are denying that mold and toxic gases could be the cause, there are many parents who are more than willing to stand the inconvenience of spending \$30 to \$40 on a special-



ized mattress cover in exchange for a little more peace of mind.

"If there's even remotely a chance this could be the cause, how could I live with myself if I didn't spend the money on a mattress cover?" says Kyle Newton, father of a 12 month old girl. "It doesn't make any sense not to get one; it's like buying any other safety product for my daughter, like a gate to keep her from falling down the stairs... it's just a smart investment."