

KEEPING BABIES SAFE FROM FALLS WHILE IN YOUR HOSPITAL

Pennsylvania data shows that 288 babies were harmed or almost harmed because of falls and other events in Pennsylvania hospitals since 2004. In 2013 alone, 51 babies were dropped. Fortunately, most of the babies were not harmed in the events, but some did suffer skull fractures or other harm. All of the events occurred while the baby was in the care of the family. However, while hospital staff were not directly responsible for the events that occurred, indirectly, there's more you can do to prevent such falls and other events from happening.



Sensitivity to the mother's feelings is important in keeping the baby safe. Listen if the mother tells you she is too tired to care for her baby, and watch for signs she may be too tired. Some of the most harmful Pennsylvania events (e.g., suffocation, skull fracture) occurred when the mother fell asleep while feeding or caring for her baby. Also make sure the mother is aware of the dangers associated with falling asleep in a hospital bed with the baby (high pillows meant to help the mother can elevate the baby above railings; if the mother's arms relax, the baby can fall down the side of the bed).

Always stress upon the mother and family members how important it is that they not handle the baby if they are too tired or try to sleep with the baby in their arms. Family and friends must be careful when handling the baby. Many of the Pennsylvania events happened because a family member fell asleep with the baby in their arms, the baby rolled off a sleeping family member's lap, or the baby was dropped while being transferred to its hospital crib.

Findings show some of the most common maternal characteristics associated with newborn falls include the following: high level of fatigue, cesarean birth, and pain medication received by the mother in the last two to four hours. Be aware of these common characteristics when leaving the baby in the care of its mother and family members. Make them aware that if they have any of these characteristics they should not handle the baby until they are rested enough to do so.

Encourage staff to report Serious Events and Incidents (near misses) involving baby falls and other events. Learn from these events, and educate facility staff and family members on how to keep babies safe in your hospital.

A *Pennsylvania Patient Safety Advisory* article and educational toolkit on newborn injuries is available online at www.patientsafetyauthority.org



Scan with your mobile device's QR reader to access the newborn injury *Advisory* article and educational toolkit.



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More information is available online at www.patientsafetyauthority.org.
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