

Snuggle Helper™ Industry Background

General

In 1991, hospitals world-wide began activities to conform to the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI). The BFHI, an initiative jointly sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), strives to improve the health of children world-wide by supporting and expanding maternal breastfeeding practices for newborns.

Hospitals in the United States continue to adapt to standards outlined by Baby-Friendly, USA (the US accrediting body for the BFHI). The standards call for maximum contact between parents and newborns to support breastfeeding and facilitate parent/child bonding.

As hospitals adapt their practices to maximize parent/child contact, new challenges have emerged. Some of the largest challenges are due to parental exhaustion. In addition to fatigue resulting from the physical effort of giving birth, parents may also experience fatigue due to post-effects of the stress and anxiety of the birth event as well as drowsiness due to the effects of pain-related medications.

The Specific Challenge

Parental exhaustion has led parents to accidentally falling asleep while holding newborns, resulting in dropped infants (called *infant falls* in the related literature). Reporting is complicated by several factors:

- Parents are often embarrassed by infant falls. Many are never reported to hospital staff. (Helsey, McDonald & Stewart, 2010).
- Often, infant falls are reported to hospital staff only if the infant shows visible signs of injury (Ruddick, Platt & Lazaro, 2010).
- In newborns, serious injuries such as subdural hemorrhages or skull fractures occur in a significant percentage of falls without visible signs of injury to the infant (Botash, 2013; Ruddick, et al. 2010). This is consistent with findings by Kupperman et al. (2009), who recommend x-ray computed tomography (CT) scans be performed on infants younger than three months following a fall, despite absence of visible signs of injury.
- Despite these recommendations, when infant falls are reported, hospital staff often base subsequent care decisions on the presence or non-presence of visible signs of injury (Ruddick et al., 2010).
- New interventions are needed to augment steps taken thus far by care givers (Galuska, 2011).
- Although no known deaths have occurred from infant falls, serious injury can occur when infants fall from heights of approximately one meter, or 39 inches (Ehsani, Ibrahim, Bugeja, & Cordner, 2010). One of the first extensive studies of serious injuries

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to infants from falls determined that most falls occur from approximately this distance (Monson, Henry, Lambert &, Schmutz, & Christensen, 2008).

Our Solution

Ideally, parents should not hold their infants while drowsy. However, drowsiness may overtake a parent with little warning when holding and/or feeding an infant while comfortably seated or laying in a supported prone position. Snuggle Helper™ was designed to enhance the safety of young infants and the confidence of parents when infants are held by family members in conditions where drowsiness may occur.

Literature References

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