



# Inner Light Birth Services

Courtney Stern, Doula  
(610) 420-8701

[www.innerlightbirthservices.com](http://www.innerlightbirthservices.com)

## Guidelines for Bed-Sharing

Many new parents are concerned about how to get enough sleep, as well as how to arrange everyone's sleeping environment so that it is safe, comfortable, and restful. There is no right answer; you will need to find a solution that works for your family. While there are many people who choose to put their babies to bed in a separate room, a growing number are finding it more convenient, restful, and enjoyable to share a bed with their infants. Infants are (usually very obviously) hard-wired to want to be close to their mothers. They have grown inside of their mothers for their entire existence, and once they are born they usually crave the warmth and security that constant close contact provides. It is also more convenient to nurse a baby who is in the same bed with you than one who is in another bed or down the hall. If you are interested in the possibility of sleeping with or near your baby, please remember these few simple guidelines...

***Never go to bed with a baby when you have ingested any mood altering substances or intoxicants.***

When you are sober you are aware of and attentive to your baby – even in your sleep – but the same can not be said if you are intoxicated or if you have used any sedatives, medications, or drugs.

***Make sure that your bodies and bedding are aligned in such a way that the blankets are not going to cover your baby's face while you are sleeping.*** It is possible to share a bed with a baby AND use light blankets, but you must do it safely. Do remove any stuffed animals and pillows that are around the infant.

***Infants are safest next to their mothers.*** Fathers and older siblings may not be as aware of the baby while they are sleeping.

***Use a relatively firm mattress.*** Waterbeds and extra soft mattresses could create a problem for a young baby who is lying on his or her stomach. Never put an infant to sleep on a pillow.

***Put younger babies to sleep on their backs.*** As your baby grows and gets better head control you may find that when side-lying to nurse, you both fall asleep on your sides.

***Do not use an infant sleep positioner (ISP – usually is a mat with a bolster on either side).*** Several deaths have been related to their use, and so far the FDA has not found any benefits to using them. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises parents against the use of ISPs due to the dangers associated with their use.

***Excessively long hair on the mother should be tied up.*** There have been cases of infant entanglement by a mother's very long hair.

***Above all: follow your instincts and ENJOY the experience!***

*References:*

McKenna, James J., *Maximizing the chances of Safe Infant Sleep in the Solitary and Cosleeping (Specifically, Bed-sharing) Contexts.* (Safe Co-Sleeping Sketch courtesy of the Mother-Baby Behavioral Sleep Laboratory)

