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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Awareness Month

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is defined as the sudden death of an infant who is less than one year of age that is unexpected and cannot be explained after a thorough case investigation. October is designated as a time to raise awareness about SIDS.

In California, SIDS is the second leading cause of mortality for infants between 28 days of age to less than one year of age in 2012. Despite years of research, the exact causes of SIDS remain unknown.

Santa Barbara County data on child deaths reflects SIDS deaths in our county.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>SIDS Deaths</th>
<th>Undetermined Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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The Coroner’s Office investigates all suspected SIDS deaths. During the death investigation if it is found that the infant was co-sleeping with adults or other children, it is possible that the infant was unintentionally suffocated by the adult or the other children. This factor does not allow for the manner of death to be determined as SIDS but to be documented as UNDETERMINED.

Undetermined deaths can sometimes be linked to unsafe bed-sharing. It is recommended that infants not share beds with anyone.

To reduce the sudden unexpected death in infancy, “Back to Sleep” campaigns have been initiated to educate parents and the public about placing babies to sleep on their backs. Other messages to reduce the risk of sudden infant death include putting babies on firm sleep surface, never smoking around a baby, and keeping soft objects out of a baby’s sleep area. Prenatal care, breastfeeding, immunizations, regular well-child checks and the avoidance of over-heating and exposure to tobacco smoke, alcohol and illicit drugs are also important preventive measures. These messages have helped to reduce the incidence of SIDS.

Locally, there is a Child Death Review Team that reviews child deaths to identify possible contributors to the cause of death. The inter-disciplinary Child Death Review Team brings law enforcement, medical, and community stakeholders together to review individual deaths with the goal of preventing future deaths.

Whenever a child dies it is always a tragedy. The Public Health Department Maternal, Child, Adolescent Health Program has Public Health Nurses who make home visits with families who have experienced loss to provide support and link them with local resources.


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