



**Creative counting**

Whitney Markland and Lora Pop, second graders at Nicholas County Elementary School, beads as a counting tool recently.

Kim Hamilton photo

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## SIDS deaths worry local child advocates

By KIM HAMILTON  
Staff Writer

With the death of two Morehead infants in the past six months, a number of local child advocates and the newly-formed locally aware local Morehead want the public to be more informed about Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

SIDS is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant under 1 year of age. SIDS also known as crib death, strikes nearly 4,000 babies in the U.S. every year.

"One of the jobs of the fatality board is to publicly address mortality in children," said Jerry Newman, physician's assistant at Morehead Clinic. "We thought the best way to do that is to educate the public on this issue."

Doctors and nurses don't know exactly what causes SIDS, but they have found some things parents can do to make babies safer, Newman said.

• One of the most important things a parent can do to help reduce the risk of SIDS is to lay a baby on its back, whether it's for a nap or overnight sleep. When we have a SIDS death, we usu-

ally find babies lying on their stomachs. We think that sleeping on their stomach causes an inability to breathe deeply, and it is a factor in SIDS," Newman said.

Putting a child on its back to sleep may be a new concept for some, he added. Many people have been told that babies should sleep on their stomachs. Now, doctors believe that fewer babies will die from SIDS if most infants sleep on their backs.

There is no evidence that sleeping on the back causes choking, Newman said.

But if a baby was born with a birth defect, often apnea after eating or has a breathing, lung or heart problem, parents should talk to a doctor or nurse about which sleep position to use.

If parents choose to allow the baby to sleep on its side, make sure the baby's lower arm is forward to stop it from rolling over onto its stomach.

• Making sure that a baby sleeps on a firm mattress also reduces the risk of SIDS. Don't use fluffy blankets or quilts under the baby. Don't let the baby sleep on a waterbed, sheepskin, pillow or other soft

materials. When the baby is very young, don't place soft stuffed toys or pillows in the crib with it. Some babies have smothered with these soft materials in the crib, Newman said.

Babies should be kept warm, but they should not be allowed to get too warm. Keep the temperature in the baby's room so that it feels comfortable.



• Create a smoke-free area around the baby. Babies and young children exposed to smoke have more colds, diseases and risk of SIDS.

• If the baby seems sick, call the doctor or clinic right away. Make sure the baby receives its shots on schedule.

• Early and regular prenatal care can help reduce the risk of SIDS. The risk is higher for babies whose mothers smoked during pregnancy. Smoking also contributes to low birth weight, another health risk.

Breast feeding helps keep the baby healthy as well.

If someone finds an infant who has stopped breathing, they should call 911 and immediately start CPR, Newman said. Don't ever shake the baby. It is a good idea for people who plan to be parents to learn CPR, he added.







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