It is hard to know what gadgets for your new baby are useful, which are unnecessary and which are actually harmful.

There are so many gizmos out there from diaper genies to video monitors to an endless list of things to attach to your stroller. But, perhaps the most tantalizing market for new parents is that of helping your baby sleep.

Who doesn't want their baby (and themselves) to get a good night's sleep? And, who doesn't think that $39.99 is worth seven straight hours of shut eye?

There are many products on the market to help make that happen but they are not all safe. Now, the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is cracking down on one of these sleeping products - the sleep positioner.

There are two commonly sold types of sleep positioners - intended for infants under 6 months old. One has raised supports or pillows (called “bolsters”) that are attached to the sides of a mat or a wedge that keeps the baby's head raised.

The positioners, ironically, are meant to keep an infant in a position while sleeping. But, with reports of babies being found in dangerous positions because of these products in addition to a dozen deaths caused by suffocation allegedly due to a positioner, the FDA is saying to steer clear of them.

In response to the news, a few companies have taken their sleep positioners off of the market, including several companies in the UK like Mothercare, John Lewis, eBay, Boots and Tesco. Kudos to them for keeping babies safe. That said, there are hundreds of companies that make
sleep positioners, and people can certainly still find one on the shelves.

The problem is the same one that Dr. Rachel Moon, chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics' Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Task Force, has echoed before - "The No.1 mistake is that parents think that if they sell it, it must be safe. That's not true."

The bottom line is that there are a lot of things out there that you can buy for your baby. But, in some aspects of baby care - less is more. Babies should sleep in a bare crib, on their back. The full list of FDA recommendations are,

- NEVER use infant sleep positioners. Using this type of product to hold an infant on his or her side or back is dangerous.
- NEVER put pillows, blankets, loose sheets, comforters, or quilts under a baby or in a crib. These products also can be dangerous. Babies don’t need pillows and adequate clothing—instead of blankets—can keep them warm.
- ALWAYS keep cribs and sleeping areas bare. That means you should also never put soft objects or toys in sleeping areas.
- ALWAYS place a baby on his or her back at night and during nap time. An easy way to remember this is to follow the ABCs of safe sleep: “Alone on the Back in a bare Crib.”

The FDA has put together an easy to understand video on tips for safe sleep. If you are interested, please watch it here [2].

Healthcare professionals and patients are encouraged to report adverse events or side effects related to the use of these products to the FDA’s MedWatch Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program:

- Complete and submit the report Online: www.fda.gov/MedWatch/report [3]
- Download form [4] or call 1-800-332-1088 to request a reporting form, then complete and return to the address on the pre-addressed form, or submit by fax to 1-800-FDA-0178

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