

Declining SIDS is More Evidence Vaccines are Safe

By *Nicholas Staropoli* — December 8, 2015



[1]

[baby sleeping via shutterstock](#) [2]

In a recent [study](#) [3] published in the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers from Boston Children's Hospital and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute presented findings on the success of the Back-to-Sleep campaign. The American Academy of Pediatrics began the campaign in 1992 to help reduce the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS.

[In the 1980's SIDS in China](#) [4] was less of a problem. That led some to hypothesize that the eastern tradition of infants sleeping in the supine position on their back led to fewer SIDS-related deaths. In just four short years, the incidence of parents ensuring their child slept on their back increased to 70 percent, from 20 percent. New data from this study show that overall, the campaign has been associated with a 71-percent decrease in the rate of SIDS, from 1.357 per 1,000 live births to 0.39 per 1,000 live births.

Objectively, this is good news. SIDS is not as quacks like Joe Mercola and the National Vaccine Information Center purport on the rise in America. Conversely, vaccines *are* on the rise here, meaning more are being administered to young children.

Before the Back-to-Sleep campaign began, when SIDS awareness was at its peak, fewer vaccines were [available](#) [5]. Today the Centers for Disease Control recommends that a child receive 14 different immunizations, many of which need to be administered as several doses to afford a child protection. Many states require most, or all, of the schedule for a child to attend public school.

So if more vaccines are being administered and SIDS is falling, how can they be linked? The answer is they aren't and never have been. But this is not news; several studies over the years have concluded as much.

So why does the myth persist?

SIDS is a scary disease and lacks a clearly understood cause. Sleeping position is one risk factor, which is why the Back-to-Sleep campaign has been so successful. But not all SIDS deaths are

sleep-position related.

Similar to autism, [SIDS appears to have a strong genetic component](#) [6]. In particular mutated genes associated with the immune system can spell certain peril for an infant. The mutation of any number of genes implicated in metabolism particularly fatty acid metabolism may also play a role in the onset of SIDS.

But this is how the anti-vaccination movement operates. It selects conditions with tragic outcomes and complex etiologies, and then claims a link to vaccines as a means to scare parents. In short, these folks exploit areas where diseases are too complicated to have clear and concise causes.

Thirty years ago, it may not have been entirely irresponsible to raise the question of a connection between SIDS and vaccines or autism for that matter. At the time, we knew very little about SIDS, and we were still learning about the immune system. But now studies have repeatedly and extensively shown that there's no link between vaccines and SIDS.

Further research into this purported link by the anti-vax movement hurts us all, in that the effort only wastes the limited financial and human resources that would be better spent investigating real solutions to these problems.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2015/12/08/declining-sids-is-more-evidence-vaccines-are-safe>

Links

[1] http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/shutterstock_262074572.jpg

[2] <http://shutterstock.com>

[3] http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2015-12/bch-seo113015.php

[4] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2866397>

[5] <http://www.chop.edu/centers-programs/vaccine-education-center/vaccine-history/vaccine-availability-timeline#.VI9cEWSrRz8>

[6] <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15543094>