



## Finnish Baby Boxes Gain in Popularity in the U.S.

For 75 years, Finland has provided its new mothers with cardboard boxes filled with infant care supplies, including diapers, clothes, and baby toys. The boxes themselves contain fitted mattresses inside them so that they can easily be used as a safe place for the babies to sleep. The idea of the boxes was to provide a safe sleeping option for newborns during the 1930s, a time when the infant mortality rate in Finland was astoundingly high (65 in 1,000 babies). Also helpful in maintaining the health of Finnish infants was the requirement that women receive the box from a doctor or prenatal clinic before their fourth month. Thus, the Finnish government was able to encourage women to visit doctors and offer them what they needed to care for new babies. The baby boxes were a resounding success.

The infant mortality rate in Finland improved rapidly. With 2.75 in 1,000 infant deaths per year, they have achieved one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world today. They have even surpassed the United States, whose infant mortality rate remains at 6 in 1,000 infant deaths per year.

According to [CNN](#), on Thursday, January 26, 2017, New Jersey became the first state in the United States to launch a baby box program to reduce infant mortality. These boxes have been distributed through New Jersey's Child Fatality and Near Fatality Review Board who worked with a California-based company called [Baby Box Co.](#) Expecting parents or parents of children under 3 months of age can register online at [babyboxuniversity.com](#) as New Jersey residents, watch a 10 to 15





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minute program on the website, take a short quiz to prove its completion, and then receive their baby boxes from a distribution partner nearby or have them shipped directly to them.

The boxes provided in New Jersey will contain similar items to those found in the original Finnish boxes, including a mattress, sheet, onesies, diapers, and wipes. They also include breast pads and breast cream, tools which may help encourage breastfeeding in new mothers who may otherwise find the task daunting.

The implementation of these boxes in New Jersey was a result of recent findings that an estimated 93% of infant fatalities associated with Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) in New Jersey were related to sleep environments and sleep itself. The boxes are growing in popularity because they combat newborn deaths due to unsafe sleep conditions and [Sudden Infant Death \(SIDS\)](#). What are some of these unsafe sleep conditions?



According to [BabyCenter](#), the key guidelines to safe sleep in infants are:

- Back to Sleep: Babies should be placed on their backs when they sleep in the first year of life.
- No Sleep Positioners: Don't use towels or sleep positioners to keep baby in one position all night. These can lead to suffocation.
- Use proper bedding: Use a firm, flat mattress with nothing but a fitted sheet on it. Ensure that the crib meets safety standards and do not add blankets, pillows, or toys into the crib. Do not let them sleep on adult mattresses, couches, or other surfaces. Avoid crib bumpers as well.



- Sleep in the proper place: Put baby to sleep only in the crib, bassinet, or play yard, and not in other places, like strollers, car seats, swings, etc. (babies under 4 months of age can suffocate if their head rolls forward too much).
- Don't overheat baby: Don't apply too many layers to your baby for sleep. It is advised that the baby wears only one layer more than you would wear to be comfortable in the room. No hats or hoods.
- Do not smoke around baby: Cigarette smoke in the baby's environment can increase his or her risk of SIDS.

Other factors have been found to influence the risk of SIDS in newborn babies. For instance, babies born prematurely or at low birth weights are more at risk of SIDS. Learn more about the [risk factors](#) of SIDS and [how to prevent it](#).

## Disclaimer

This page is intended solely as an educational tool for parents. It is not intended as – and should not be mistaken for – medical advice.

## Sources on Infant Sleep Boxes:

- [BBC: Why Finnish Babies Sleep in Cardboard Boxes](#)
- [NY Times: Why Finland's Newborns Sleep in Cardboard Cribs](#)
- [The Baby Box Company](#)
- [CNN: New Jersey Gives out Free Baby Boxes in Move to Lower Infant Mortality Rates](#)



# More Information on SIDS:

- [CDC: Sudden Unexpected Infant Death and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome](#)
- [Mayo Clinic: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome](#)
- [BabyCenter – SIDS: Keeping your baby safe during sleep](#)
- [American Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Institute](#)
- [CNN: Get Bumpers out of Cribs, Doctor Group Urges](#)
- [National Institute of Child Health and Human Development: Fast Facts about SIDS](#)