

**PEORIA AREA EMS SYSTEM
PEDIATRIC PREHOSPITAL CARE MANUAL**

**Sudden Infant Death
Syndrome (SIDS) Protocol**

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and the death of a child are among the most difficult patient care experiences for the prehospital professional. SIDS is the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States and the causes are not known.

The death of a child is a horrible event and creates difficult emotional issues for the caregivers as well as for the prehospital professional. The infant may be in the care of a parent/caregiver or babysitter at the time of death and may not be at home. Absence of one or both parents may complicate field management and interactions at the scene (PEPP 2001).

First Responder Care, BLS Care, ILS Care, ALS Care

1. Render initial care in accordance with the *Routine Pediatric Care Protocol*.
2. **If obvious signs of biological death are present** (*pulseless, apneic, cold skin, frothy/blood tinged fluid in the mouth, lividity, dark red mottling on the body, rigor mortis*):
 - a) Confirm absence of breathing and pulse.
 - b) Confirm asystole in two (2) or more leads.
 - c) **Contact Medical Control** and follow procedures for death at scene.
 - d) Provide for the needs of the family:
 - ➡ Have at least one prehospital professional stay with the family until a support network is established.
 - ➡ Contact support personnel:
 - ❖ Clergy
 - ❖ Other family members
 - ❖ Friends
 - ❖ Professional counselors
3. Consider the possibility of child maltreatment:
 - a) Refer to *Suspected Child Maltreatment Protocol*.
 - b) Obtain past medical history and the history of events.
 - ➡ Refrain from asking judgmental or leading questions.
 - ➡ Do not place blame or accusations.
4. Consider CISM for prehospital personnel.

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Critical Thinking Elements

- **The decision of staying on scene or transporting a dead infant to the ED is a difficult one. Consider these factors:**
 - a) **Could this be a crime scene?**
 - b) **Am I giving false hope to the family?**
- **The prehospital caregiver cannot determine the true cause of death in an infant. Therefore, do not rush to judgment. Treat every caregiver as a grieving parent regardless of the situation.**
- **There are nearly 3000 SIDS cases per year in the United States:**
 - a) **90-95% of SIDS cases are < 6 months old.**
 - b) **5% of SIDS cases are actually due to child neglect.**
 - c) **SIDS cases occur more frequently in males & during the winter months.**