



La Leche League New Zealand Inc.
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Book Review

Sleeping with Your Baby: A Parent's Guide to Cosleeping

By James McKenna
Platypus Media, USA, 2007

Reviewed by Rosemary Gordon

This is a short (126 pages) and easy-to-read book by James McKenna, well known already in LLL circles as a research scientist who has long studied bed-sharing and its relationship to maternal and child health at the Mother-Baby Behavioural Sleep Laboratory at the University of Notre Dame.

This book was written partly in response to the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation in 2005 that babies should sleep in the same room as their parents, but not in the same bed. Such blanket recommendations are not confined to the AAP- they are also much favoured by many of the coroners around New Zealand, who issue strong statements against bed-sharing under any circumstances each time they hold an inquiry into the death of a baby from SIDS, regardless of the circumstances surrounding that death.

Dr McKenna does not deny that in certain circumstances sharing a bed may be dangerous for babies, but he is opposed to such recommendations without looking at individual circumstances - he asserts that no one-size-fits-all. If parents are aware of the potential risks and eliminate those hazards, then bed-sharing has many benefits for both parents and babies. No one way is correct, and each family is unique.

Co-sleeping is not confined to bed-sharing, but also embraces room-sharing and many variations of both of the above. Co-sleeping is good for babies, for breastfeeding and for parents, and has advantages for bottle-fed babies too, although here room-sharing is recommended rather than bed-sharing.

The second half of this book contains Dr McKenna's guidelines for safe co-sleeping, whether bed-sharing or room sharing. There is a section on Frequently Asked Questions about co-sleeping, and a number of appendices which cover not only further reading, resources and references, but also examples of co-sleeping products and the AAP statement on co-sleeping, together with the responses of a number of organisations, including LLLI.

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