

Sudden Unexpected Infant Death



What is Sudden Unexpected Infant Death or SUID?

SUID refers to the sudden unexpected death of a baby less than a year old, often during sleep. There is typically no indication of physical distress before the event of passing. In the US, about 3,500 babies pass each year from SUIDS.

SUID vs. SIDS?

While SUID is sudden and occurs when the baby is less than a year old, a cause can usually be identified. In contrast, with SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome), the cause of death within the first year of life cannot be determined through investigative methods such as autopsy, examination of the death scene, or review of the infant's clinical history.

SUID & SIDS: Implications for Families of Color

Major technological advancements in the last few decades that have better assisted mothers before during, and after pregnancy, the rates of SUID or SIDs have seen a considerable decline since the 1990s. However, families of color, such as American Indian/Alaskan native and non-Hispanic black infants, experience SUID rates 2.3 times higher than other groups, and 2.8 times higher than white infants specifically. While there has been a general decline in SIDS rates, rates for Black infants increased by 15% in 2020. These disparities have been attributed to economic, social, and health inequities historically faced by these groups.

Grief After SUID or SIDS



Grieving after SUID or SIDS

Grief is not only emotional; it is also common to experience physical manifestations of the anguish you feel. These physical symptoms may include:

- Heart palpitations
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Stomach pain
- Loss of focus
- Anxiety
- blame
- Sleepiness
- Appetite changes
- Shortness of breath
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Frustration
- Anger
- Guilt

Please alert a medical professional if the symptoms listed above persist for an extended period after your loss, or if they become too intense to perform daily living tasks or maintain relationships with others.

Complex grief can be accompanied by depression and other mental and medical health complications, as well as social isolation, which may lead to interpersonal and economic challenges.

REFERENCES:

<https://www.mchlibrary.org/collections/suid-sids/definitions.php>

<https://sids.org/what-is-sidssuid/>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/womeninfants/infantmort/suids.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/sids/about/index.htm>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/end-of-life/in-depth/grief/art-20045340>

<https://www.nwica.org/press-releases/health-inequities-leading-to-sids-increase-among-black-infants-must-be-addressed-wic-is-part-of-the-solution>

Grief After SUID or SIDS



The Impact on the You and Your Family

Perinatal loss can deeply impact a family system, weakening the structure and robbing you of the normalcy in everyone's lives. Tackling these disruptions is key to determining what your new normal looks like. Shock and guilt, combined with the sudden or unexpected nature of the death, can be extremely difficult to navigate your family through, especially when your grief is so personal.

Parents may often blame themselves.

Grandparents grieve the loss of their first grandchild.

Surviving children may feel overwhelmed with confusion as they try to grasp the sudden absence of a sibling.

Your partner/spouse may be grieving differently from you, and your intimate relationship has changed.

Extended family members may feel stressed because they don't know how to help or what to say.

Work may still demand the same of you, despite the unbearable pain you manage daily, and you might need to take time off not only to grieve but also to adhere to the legal proceedings that follow a SUID/SIDS death.

On top of all that, the investigation into the death may not produce conclusive results, and the understanding you and your family seek may not be achievable.

Trained health professionals are available to support you and your family through these challenges and help you achieve lasting healing. Most of them use a holistic approach that incorporates physical activity, social and mental health support, sleep, and nutrition into your family's wellness plan. It may also be helpful to locate a support group or peer mentor program for individuals dealing with (whether directly or indirectly) perinatal loss.