

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Celebrating National Safe Sleep Day: 1 December**

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## **National Safe Sleep Day: Pepi-pods in our hospitals and a competition for new parents**

Nelson Marlborough Health is investing in more safe sleep devices for babies, and teaching people how to weave their own wahakura for baby to sleep in.

These initiatives will be celebrated on Te Rā Mokopuna (National Safe Sleep day) on 1 December.

The day promotes safe sleeping practices to reduce the rate of Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy (SUDI), caused by accidental suffocation or a previously-identified illness.

The major risk factors for SUDI are exposure to smoking during pregnancy and co-sleeping with babies, especially when parents are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It is a leading cause of preventable death for New Zealand babies, with approximately 44 lost every year to SUDI.

Ditre Tamatea, GM Maori Health and Vulnerable Populations at Nelson Marlborough Health (NMH), says 80 per cent of the babies that die from SUDI nationally are Maori, and the rates in the Nelson Marlborough region are significantly higher for Maori than non-Maori, which makes SUDI a Maori health priority.

“SUDI in many ways is the canary in the cage that signals we need to do better as a health system for our young pepi and the whanau looking after them,” he says. “We need to provide whanau with knowledge and supports to enable them to uphold safe sleep practices.”

Ditre is working with NMH maternity services, the NMH public health service and local Maori health providers to reduce the SUDI rates in the region.

### **More safe sleep devices in our hospitals**

PepiPods, minipods and wahakura (a traditional flax bassinet) are on their way to Nelson and Wairau hospitals, funded by the Nelson Marlborough Health Care Foundation and the Ministry of Health.

“PepiPods and wahakura bassinets are a physical asset, a taonga that whanau can use for baby to sleep safely in and they help to reinforce safe sleep messages,” Ditre says.

Debbie Fisher, Nelson Marlborough Health Associate Director of Midwifery says the introduction of mini pods to the maternity units soon will really help support mothers and babies in the early days with safe sleeping, breastfeeding and bonding.

Debbie says the new baby beds come under a broader Nelson Marlborough Health safe sleep model of care where a 'train-the-trainers programme' will increase the number of people distributing and promoting safe sleep beds.

Other initiatives include the purchase of non-motorised breast pumps to help support infant breast feeding rates, and the Pepi First incentivised quit smoking programme which targets pregnant mothers to give up smoking. In 2018 a Hapu Ora Kaupapa Maori pregnancy and parenting programme will be piloted in Nelson Marlborough.

### **More safe sleep devices in our homes**

In Marlborough wananga are being held to teach people how to weave wahakura.

“Wahakura are 'he taonga tuku iho' a gift passed on from our ancestors. Our local weavers are keeping this kaupapa alive and sharing this with our community,” Ditre says.

### **Reducing risk factors for SUDI**

'PEPE' is a framework developed by SUDI prevention advocates. It is based on the best available evidence about how to prevent SUDI:

**P**lace baby in their own bed, in the same room as their parent or caregiver. If co-sleeping is desired, consider placing baby safely in a wahakura (woven bassinet for infants) or PepiPod. If co-sleeping, the sleep device must be firm and strong enough that a parent or caregiver would not roll on or into this while asleep.

**E**liminate smoking during pregnancy and protect baby with a smokefree whānau, whare and environment. The wider whānau can also provide support to mum by also becoming smokefree.

**P**osition baby flat on their back to sleep.

**E**ncourage and support mum to breastfeed.

### **Competition: Celebrate Safe Sleep Day**

Nelson Marlborough Health is celebrating Safe Sleep Day in Marlborough by giving away a gorgeous hamper for a pepi (baby). For competition details see the post pinned at the top of the Nelson Marlborough Health – Marlborough Facebook page. ( [www.facebook.com/wairauhospital/](http://www.facebook.com/wairauhospital/))

### **Useful links**

Further information about Safe Sleep Day is available on: [www.SUDInationalcoordination.co.nz](http://www.SUDInationalcoordination.co.nz) or on the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/MokopunaOra/>

### **Ends**

### **Contact:**

Jane Horder, Communications Officer, Nelson Marlborough Health  
03 539 5346 / 027 659 7090 / [jane.horder@nmdhb.govt.nz](mailto:jane.horder@nmdhb.govt.nz)