Press Release

Breastfeeding may cut the risk of SIDS

*Breastfeeding has multiple other benefits including improvement in immunity and the mother’s wellbeing*

**New Delhi, 31 October 2017:** Evidence from a recent research has suggested that babies who are exclusively breastfed for at least two months stand a lesser chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The risk is cut by almost half, the study finds. Breastfeeding has also earlier been suggested to cut the risk of asthma and benefit the mother’s wellbeing. There are ongoing efforts worldwide to improve the rates of breastfeeding, and the WHO has the goal of having more than half of infants worldwide being breastfed exclusively for at least six months by 2025.

SIDS refers to the unexplained death, usually during sleep, of a seemingly healthy baby less than a year old. It is also known as crib death because the infants often die in their cribs. Among others, few reasons for SIDS include defects in the portion of an infant's brain that controls breathing and arousal from sleep.

Speaking about this, **Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement**, said, “Although SIDS is the leading cause of death among infants between 1 month and 1 year, it remains unpredictable despite years of research. SIDS is more likely in babies placed on their stomachs to sleep than among those sleeping on their backs. They should also not be placed on their sides to sleep. A baby can easily roll from a side position onto the belly during sleep. Infants who die from SIDS may have a problem with the part of the brain that helps control breathing and waking during sleep. If a baby is breathing stale air and not getting enough oxygen, the brain usually triggers the baby to wake up and cry to get more oxygen. If the brain is not picking up this signal, oxygen levels will continue to fall.”

There are certain factors that may increase a baby’s risk of SIDS. These include age, sex, race, family history, secondhand smoke, and being born prematurely.

Adding further, **Dr Aggarwal**, said, “When compared with infants who sleep on their backs, infants who sleep on their stomachs are less reactive to noise; experience sudden decreases in blood pressure and heart rate control; and experience less movement, higher arousal thresholds, and
longer periods of deep sleep. The simple act of placing infants on their backs to sleep significantly lowers SIDS risk.”

Here are some tips that may reduce the chances of SIDS in babies.

- Get early and regular prenatal care.
- Place the baby on a firm mattress to sleep on not on other surfaces.
- Cover the mattress with a fitted sheet. Keep soft objects and loose bedding out of the sleep area.
- Avoid bumper pads as they can lead to suffocation or strangulation.
- Practice room-sharing without bed-sharing. Experts recommend that infants sleep in their parents' room but on a separate surface at least for 6 months, when the risk of SIDS is highest.
- Breastfeed exclusively as far as possible, for the first six months.
- Make sure the baby does not get too warm while sleeping. Dress them as per the room temperature, and don't over bundle.
- Don't smoke during pregnancy or after birth. Smoking, both active and secondhand, is a risk factor for SIDS.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs during pregnancy or after birth. Parents who drink or use drugs should not share a bed with their infant.
- Ensure that the baby gets all recommended immunizations.

-Ends-

About IMA: Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

For further information please contact:
Sanjeev Khanna - 9871079105
Md Adib Ahmad – 9873716235
mediaimahq@gmail.com
IMA Public & Media Advocacy Cell