Babies protect their airway by swallowing \(^1,2\).

In the supine position, swallowing and arousal reflexes allow the baby to clear and protect their own airway \(^1,2\).

When a baby is on their back, the upper respiratory airways are positioned above the oesophagus. Regurgitated milk (orange lines) is easily swallowed and aspiration of fluid into the airways is less likely to occur \(^1,2\).

The risk of oesophageal reflux, aspiration and choking is reduced when babies are placed on their backs to sleep \(^3,4\).

The side position is less safe than the supine position and is not recommended \(^5-8\).

The risk of sudden infant death for side-sleeping babies is between 2 to 4 times higher than for babies who sleep on their back \(^5,6\).

Rolls and devices intended to keep babies on their side do not stop infants rolling prone and are not recommended \(^5-8\).

The supine position provides airway protection. Airway protection is significantly reduced in the prone position.

Healthy infants can and do protect their airways when placed supine. Babies are not at increased risk of choking, provided that swallowing and arousal are intact (normal) \(^1,2\).

There is overwhelming evidence that the supine position is safest for babies.

References: