

How we sleep, with whom we sleep, and where we sleep is molded both by culture and custom, traditions handed down through generations. For most of human history, babies and children slept with their mothers, or with both parents. Private sleeping is rare except in more affluent societies. The majority of people around the world still live in one-room shelters where all activities conducted while they are awake or asleep, take place. In almost all cultures around the globe today, babies sleep with an adult and children sleep with parents or other siblings. It is only in industrialized Western societies that sleep has become a private affair. In 67 percent of cultures around the world, children sleep in the company of others. In none of those cultures do babies sleep in a separate place before one year of age.

There are many benefits to parents and children sharing sleep, but it is important to remember that sleep sharing might not work if it is started too late, and that no one sleeping arrangement works for all families all the time.

### **Benefits of sleeping with children:**

- Sharing sleep reflects an attitude of acceptance of the child. The infant trusts that his/her parents will be available during the night just as they are during the day.
- Helps the baby not resent going to sleep and not to fear staying asleep.
- Babies sleep better, mothers stay asleep better.
- Breastfeeding is easier.
- Babies thrive.
- However well-wrapped a baby may be, his/her temperature can never be maintained as satisfactorily as when s/he has skin-to-skin contact with another human being.