



Instagram babies break sleep rules

After seeing an American study that showed many of the babies in Instagram pictures were not sleeping in accordance with the safety guidelines, Floortje Kanits was curious to know if that was also the case in the Netherlands.

Kanits got a PhD in Nutrition and Health at the end of September for her research on the prevention of cot deaths. ‘What we read and see plays a big part in determining what we think of as normal. For example, if we see lots of pictures of babies sleeping in a certain position on social media, we will start to think that’s normal even if it is not in accordance with the guidelines. But those guidelines — the baby should sleep on its back in a baby sleeping bag in its own empty cot — were drawn up to reduce the risk of cot death.’

‘Only six photos of babies sleeping satisfied all the guidelines’

Kanits collected the 200 most recent Instagram photos for 22 Dutch hashtags and 10 Instagram accounts belonging to large Dutch companies and

platforms targeting the parents of babies and young children. ‘I had a total of 562 unique photos — and only six satisfied all the sleep guidelines. That is less than two per cent. America scored nearly four times better with 7.5 per cent.’

Cuddly toy

As Kanits points out, ‘This does not mean most people who share their baby photos are not keeping to the recommendations. But you can imagine that if your social media only shows photos of babies lying on their stomach or with a cuddly toy in their bed, it won’t occur to you this is actually unsafe.’ DV