



Call to help save babies' lives

FROM HARDSHIP
TO HOPE...
— KIDS HEALTH FUND —



Bry Kopu with a flax-woven wahakura and Beki Madden holds a Pēpi Pod, given to at-risk families for their babies.



Knitters sought to make blankets



Safe and breathable blankets are needed for babies in Taranaki.

Taranaki Health Foundation general manager Bry Kopu is calling for people who can knit or crochet to make pure wool blankets for infants using Pēpi Pods.

If people can't knit or crochet, they could donate pure wool or even old woollen blankets, which can be cut up and sewn into pod-sized coverings.

The hand-made blankets need to be 70cm wide and 60cm long.

Safe sleep champion Beki Madden says polar fleece is particularly dangerous for babies. "Put baby on a polar fleece blanket for no-nappy time and see how long the urine takes to absorb – it's about 10 minutes."

If a baby is wrapped in polar fleece and sweats, the moisture will cool down and the baby will get cold and stressed.

Safe sleeping positions, Pēpi Pods, mattresses and pure woollen blankets can greatly help babies' chances of survival.

"It would be amazing if we could get all babies in a safe sleep space of their own and in safe natural materials," Beki says.

People wanting to donate wool or blankets can drop them off at the main reception at Taranaki Base or Hawera Hospitals.

By Virginia Winder

Taranaki people are being asked to help keep babies safe while sleeping.

Every year, between 40 and 50 babies die from sudden unexpected death in New Zealand and sadly half of those are accidentally suffocated by their parents while sleeping in the same bed.

There is a safe and proven solution – Pēpi Pods, which are similar to a bassinet and are for babies that do not already have their own suitable safe sleep space.

The Taranaki Health Foundation is seeking funds to buy life-saving Pēpi Pods plus mattresses and safe bedding for each. These will enable babies at risk to sleep safely in their own space.

Foundation general manager Bry Kopu says the pods were born from the Christchurch earthquake and are now used throughout the country. "They were initially an emergency response."

The pods are free to at-risk families, especially those in a smoking environment, have low birthweight, are preterm and includes parents that do not have a safe sleep space as well as Maori babies who have a higher rate of SUDI.

Midwife and Pēpi Pod co-ordinator and safe sleep champion, Beki Madden says the pods also give babies their own breathing space.

"The babies of pregnant women who live in a smoking environment – it could be their partner who is the smoker – are most at risk."

"These babies come out and they are breathing shallower because they are used to getting less oxygen," Beki says. "So if they are in a situation where they need to breathe more, they can't." There is evidence that an unborn baby's exposure to maternal smoking while in utero reduces the frequency of arousal from sleep after the infant is born.

Beki, says these babies are high risk for sudden unexpected death in infancy, especially if they sleep in their parents' bed. With a Pēpi Pod, the infant has its own space so Mum or Dad can't roll on baby."

The fundraising push for the pods is part of the Foundation's From Hardship to Hope campaign, which supports families and children in need.

Bry adds, there is also the wahakura which are woven harakeke pods, which can be sourced from a national supplier in the Hawke's Bay. "The Foundation is keen to commission a weaver or a collective in Taranaki to make the bassinets."

"It's not just about the Pēpi Pods," Beki says. "It's about safe sleep education and advocating for safe sleep practices in every home in Taranaki."

There are four main ways a baby can accidentally suffocate. "Through a covered face, pinched nose, "chin to chest" position of the neck, and pressure on or against the chest."

"When the parents get the pod they get a safety briefing and are taught how to make up the Pēpi Pod to the age of the baby. It should last four to six months," says Beki.

The rules of protection for babies put to sleep in Pēpi Pods are:

- **The babies need to have their feet at the bottom of the pod**
- **Sheets and blankets under the arm pits**
- **On the back, clear face**
- **Only baby in this space**
- **Breastfed, smokefree**
- **Sober carer close by me**
- **Own space, gentle care**
- **Drugs and drinking nowhere near**

People keen to donate to this life-saving cause can go to: www.taranakihealthfoundation.org.nz or phone 06 753 6139 extension 8439.

Pēpi Pod Amnesty

Families in Taranaki are asked to help save lives by handing back Pēpi Pods no longer in use.

Three years ago, 300 pods were given out in the region and only about 20 have come back, says Pēpi Pods co-ordinator Beki Madden.

"Pēpi Pods have gone out all over Taranaki and we would really like to increase the number we get back," Beki says. The death of a baby is devastating. "It's heart-breaking for everyone involved – the family, the midwife, the Plunket nurses – and is something that is so easily preventable."

Taranaki Health Foundation general manager Bry Kopu says the amnesty on Pēpi Pods can have a far-reaching affect. "If you give it back, it will help another family and may even save a life. As mums we need to help each other and advocate safe sleep for others Taranaki wide."

People who have a Pēpi Pod can drop it off to maternity at Taranaki Base and Hawera Hospitals or text 021 185 6571 so Beki can arrange a pickup.



Every cent we raise will go directly to helping sick kids and their families experiencing genuine hardship. PLEASE SUPPORT US TODAY!

Every cent we raise will go directly to helping Taranaki kids and their families in genuine hardship. Please help us by supporting the campaign:

- You can donate online at givealittle.co.nz Keyword [Taranaki Health Foundation] select donate now 'From Hardship to Hope' <https://givealittle.co.nz/org/TaranakiHF>
- Write a cheque, payable to Taranaki Health Foundation and post to 'From Hardship to Hope Campaign', Taranaki Health Foundation, PO Box 8029, New Plymouth 4342. Please include your contact details for a receipt.
- Visit any TSB Bank branch in Taranaki to make a donation or use TSB Bank Online or Mobile Banking: TSB Bank 15-3942-08375 10-02 Ref: Your name. Please contact us directly for a donation receipt.

For more information: visit www.taranakihealthfoundation.org.nz or call 06 753 8688 or email Taranaki Health Foundation General Manager Bry Kopu on bry.kopu@tdhb.org.nz

"Community support for this project will help provide protection for our vulnerable infants/pēpē by ensuring each baby has their own safe sleep space and educate families by integrating the message of safe sleeping, smokefree and breastfeeding to reduce the risk of Sudden Death In Infancy (SUDI) and accidental suffocation."

Belinda Chapman RM., RN., DPSM, MMid.
Associate Director of Midwifery
Taranaki District Health Board

"It would be amazing if we could get all babies in a safe sleep position of their own and in safe natural materials."

Rebecca (Beki) Madden
Midwife, Safe Sleep Champion & Pēpi Pod
Co-ordinator, Taranaki District Health Board

"The amnesty on Pēpi Pods can have a far-reaching affect. "If you give it back, it will help another family and may even save a life."

General Manager Bry Kopu
Taranaki Health Foundation

Foundation Acknowledgement



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