Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or "crib death," is the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant, usually under one year of age, which remains unexplained after a complete medical history, death scene investigation and postmortem examination.

The majority of SIDS deaths (90%) occur in infants less than six months of age. SIDS is more common in males (60%) than females (40%). SIDS almost always occurs when the infant is asleep or thought to be asleep. SIDS is more prevalent in winter months and in infants with low birth weights. SIDS occurs in all socio-economic, racial and ethnic groups. Occasionally, a mild upper respiratory infection may be present prior to death.

Physical examination of a SIDS infant may reveal lividity or settling of blood, which produces mottled, blue or gray skin. The lividity may give the appearance of "bruising." There may also be a froth, blood tinged mucus draining from the infant's mouth and nostrils. In addition, cooling and rigor mortis may be present. The SIDS infant usually appears well-developed and does not exhibit any signs of external injury.

SIDS should not be confused with child abuse. Initially it is difficult to distinguish a SIDS death from other causes of death in infants. SIDS is the leading cause of death between one week and one year of age in the United States.