

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

May 19, 2022

In news- A new research, conducted by scientists in Australia have found that **babies who are at risk of sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS, have low levels of an enzyme called butyrylcholinesterase (BChE) in their blood.**

What is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)?

- SIDS, also **known as 'cot death'** refers to the **sudden and unexpected death of an otherwise healthy infant under the age of one**, generally **while they are sleeping**.
- Most SIDS-related deaths **occur in infants between the age of 1-4 months**.
- Some health experts have said that it is **associated with issues in the part of an infant's brain** that controls breathing and waking up.
- Parents can reduce the risk of SIDS by not smoking while pregnant or after the baby is born and ensuring that the baby is placed on their back when they sleep.
- However **experts have been unable to identify what causes the deadly disease**.
- While the **Australian study could potentially pave the way for early intervention and diagnosis, health experts warn there is still a long way to go** before the true cause of SIDS is identified.

Concern-

- While the findings of this study are significant, **scientists are still some time away from identifying the cause and cure of SIDS**.
- While the study has found that babies with SIDS reported lower **BChE levels** than infants without the disease, **it** has not laid down what a "normal" level of the enzyme looks like.
- The study notes that several other factors and changes

in the first six months of an infant's life can also contribute to low levels of these enzymes.

What is the BChE enzyme?

- These enzymes are **responsible for sending out signals that make a baby wake up, turn her head, or gasp for breath.**
- It is **part of the autonomic system, and controls functions like blood pressure and breathing.**
- The BCHE gene provides instructions for making the pseudocholinesterase enzyme, also known as butyrylcholinesterase, which is produced by the liver and circulates in the blood.