

Health & Safety for Caregivers

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Selecting and Using Nursery and Baby Equipment Safety

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year many infants and young children suffer injury and death as a result of accidents involving unsafe or improperly used infant furniture and equipment. Information in this fact sheet provides safety guidelines for the selection and use of common furniture and equipment used in the care of young children. Child care providers can use this information to assist them in selecting safe new or secondhand equipment and evaluating the safety of the equipment currently used in their daycare.

Cribs

More infants die every year in accidents involving cribs than with any other nursery product. Thousands of infants are injured seriously enough to require medical treatment.

Safety Standards for Cribs

1. Corner posts should not extend more than 1/16 inch above the top of the end panel.
2. Slats should be no more than 2 and 3/8 inches apart. No slats should be missing, loose, or cracked.
3. The mattress should fit snugly, with no more than the width of two fingers between mattress and crib side.
4. Mattress support hangers should be secured by bolts or closed hooks and tightened securely.
5. If bumper pads are used, they should fit around the entire crib and tie or snap securely at each corner and in the middle of each long side. Trim off any excess length of ties to prevent a choking hazard.
6. Always remove and destroy all plastic wrapping material. Never use a plastic bag or any plastic film as a mattress cover as this can be a suffocation hazard. Only use a well-fitting mattress pad designed for a baby bed.
7. There should be no decorative cut out in the head or footboard.
8. If your crib does not meet safety standards, stop using it immediately and replace it with a crib that meets Federal safety regulations.

Additional Safety Suggestions

- To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) place the baby on his or her back in a crib with a firm, flat mattress. Remove comforters, pillows, quilts, sheepskins, and stuffed toys from the crib.
- Never place an infant to sleep on an adult bed, water bed, bunk bed, or sofa.
- Do not place the crib near window blinds or draperies. Children can strangle on the window cords or can fall through screens. Make sure all cords are out of the reach of children.
- Always lock the side rails in the raised position whenever the child is in the crib.
- When the child reaches 35 inches in height, he or she has outgrown the crib and should sleep in a bed.



Adapted by:
Kathy L. Jelley, M.Ed.
Family and Consumer
Sciences Extension Agent,
Brown County and
Assistant Professor,
Ohio State University Extension



Crib Toys

Crib gyms and other toys that stretch across the crib with strings, cords, or ribbons can be a strangulation hazard for older or more active babies.

Safety Standards for Crib Toys

1. Make sure that crib gyms are installed securely at both ends so they cannot be pulled down into the crib.
2. Remove crib gyms and mobiles from the crib when the baby is 5 months old or begins to push up on hands and knees.
3. Mobiles and toys that hang over a crib or playpen should be out of the reach of children.
4. Parts of toys should be large enough not to be a choking hazard.

Baby Gates and Enclosures

Baby gates are used at the top and bottom of stairs or in open doorways to prevent toddlers from falling or entering unsafe areas. DO NOT USE the old accordion-style gates that have large V-shaped openings along the top edge and large diamond-shaped openings between the slats. Deaths have occurred when children's heads have become entangled in the V-shaped or diamond-shaped openings. These gates have not been sold since 1985, but they may still be found in yard sales and thrift shops. These gates are unsafe.

Choosing and Using Safe Gates

1. Choose a gate with a straight top edge and rigid bars with a mesh screen, or openings too small to entrap a child's head.
2. The gate should be securely anchored in the doorway or at the top or bottom of the stairway it is blocking. Use caution when placing gates at the top of stairways because children have pushed gates over and fallen down the stairs.
3. Gates that are retained with an expanding pressure bar are to be installed with the bar on the side away from the child. This is to prevent the child from using the bar as a toehold to climb. Pressure bar gates are not recommended to be used at the top of stairways.

High Chairs

A safe high chair should have a waist strap and a strap that goes between the legs. These straps, when used properly, help keep the child from standing up and toppling the chair over or from sliding underneath the tray. While in the high chair, the child should ALWAYS be restrained with both straps.

Selecting a High Chair

1. Select one that has a wide base for stability.
2. Check the restraining straps to ensure that the waist strap has a buckle that cannot be fastened unless the crotch strap is also used.
3. Restraining straps should be easy to use.

4. Look for a high chair that has a post between the child's leg to prevent the child from slipping down and becoming entrapped under the tray.
5. The tray should lock securely in place.
6. If using a secondhand chair, check the condition of the straps and that they fasten properly. If the straps are not safe to use, contact the manufacturer for replacement straps. If the chair cannot be made safe, do not use it.

Other High Chair Safety Tips

- The crotch and waist safety straps should be fastened as soon as the child is placed in the high chair and unfastened only when the child is removed.
- Be sure the locking device on a folding high chair is locked each time it is set up.
- Stay close by and supervise the child at all times.
- Never allow the child to stand up in the high chair.
- Keep the high chair far enough away from a table, counter, or wall so the child can't push against it.

Playpens and Travel Cribs

Never leave an infant in a mesh playpen or crib with the sides in the down position. When the mesh side is down, the mesh hangs loosely, forming a pocket between the edge of the floor panel and the side. Infants can roll into this mesh pocket, become trapped, and suffocate. Children can also cut or pinch their fingers on the unlocked hinges. Always keep the sides up and in the locked position.

Playpens and travel cribs with a rotating hinge in the center of each top rail, also pose a safety hazard. Top rails can collapse and formed a "V" shape in which an infant's neck can become entrapped. It is not recommended to use this type of product.

Choosing a Playpen or Travel Crib

1. Look for a playpen or travel crib that has top rails that automatically lock when lifted into the normal use position.
2. Look for mesh netting with a very small weave (less than 1/4 inch). Mesh must be smaller than the tiny buttons on baby's clothes.
3. Slats on wooden playpens should be no more than 2 and 3/8 inches in width.

Safety Tips for Playpens and Travel Cribs

- Always set up and use a playpen or travel crib according to the manufacturer's directions.
- Always keep the sides up and in the locked position.
- Remove large toys, bumper pads, or boxes from inside the playpen; they can be used for climbing out.
- Do not tie items or toys across the top or corners of the playpen; they can be a strangulation hazard.

Toy Chests

Toy chests are great for storing toys, but if they do not meet safety standards, tragedy can result. Injury and death to young children have occurred when the lids of products used for toy storage, such as trunks, wicker trunks, and

wooden storage chests, have fallen, striking the head or neck of the child. Several children have also suffocated when they became trapped in toy chests that were not designed with adequate ventilation.

Selecting a Safe Toy Chest

1. Look for a toy chest that has a lid support that will hold the hinged lid open in any position in which it is placed or buy one with a detached lid or doors.
2. Look for a toy chest with ventilation holes that cannot be blocked if the chest is placed against the wall. When the toy chest lid is closed, there should be a gap between the lid and the sides of the chest.
3. Make sure the lid of the chest does not have any type of latch that could entrap a child.
4. If you have a toy chest or trunk with a free falling lid, **remove the lid or install a spring-loaded lid support** to avoid possible injury.

Baby Walkers

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), more than 14,000 children are sent to the hospital each year with injuries involving baby walkers. The AAP feels strongly that baby walkers are very dangerous and advises parents and child care providers not to use them. While the new wider-based walker will help prevent falls down stairs, it will not prevent other walker-related injuries such as burns, poisoning, pinched fingers and toes, and drowning. Because walkers have wheels, children can move very fast and can reach higher, putting them at risk for injuries. The AAP recommends using a stationary activity center instead of a wheeled walker. For more detailed information on baby walkers, you can go to the AAP website at www.aap.org/family/babywalkers

Strollers and Carriages

1. Strollers should have a wide base to prevent tipping.
2. Seat belt and crotch straps should be securely attached and easy to use.
3. Brakes should securely lock the wheels.
4. If there is a shopping basket, it should be low on the back and located directly over or in front of the wheels.
5. When the stroller is used in the carriage position, the leg hole openings should be able to be closed so the child cannot slip into the opening and become entrapped by the head.

Safety Tips for Strollers and Carriages

- Never leave a child unattended, even when the child is asleep.
- Always secure seat belts.
- Do not use pillows, folded quilts or blankets as a mattress in the stroller.
- A stroller is not a toy. Never let children use it as a play thing.

Changing Tables

Most injuries involving changing tables occur when children fall from the changing table to the floor. In an instant, an unrestrained active baby can roll over and fall. Remember, to prevent injury always use the safety straps and never leave the child unattended.

For more comprehensive safety information on safe nursery equipment, furniture, and toys, request a free copy of *The Safe Nursery* booklet available from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207. You can also visit their website at www.cpsc.gov.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, The Safe Nursery. CPSC Document # 202. Available from <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/202.pdf>