

## Cribs, Playpens, & Bassinets

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Whether sleeping or awake, infants and young children spend much of their time in cribs, playpens, and bassinets. These products are unique among nursery products in that they are intended to be SECURE locations where parents can place their infant and walk away knowing their child is safe and protected while alone and unattended.

However, as evidenced by the more than 11 million cribs that have been recalled by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) since September 2007 because of safety issues, cribs are not always as safe as parents believe. Poor design, product defects, faulty setup, and improper use have led to deaths, infant entrapments, and scores of other injuries to children.

More than 180,000 children younger than 2 years of age were treated in emergency departments in the United States for injuries related to cribs, playpens, and bassinets over a nineteen-year study period, from 1990-2008. This is an average of 26 children injured per day, and there was an average of 113 crib-related deaths per year. Most injuries involved cribs (83%), followed by playpens (13%) and bassinets (4%).

The most common cause of injury was a fall, representing two-thirds of injuries, and the most frequently injured body region was the head or neck (40%). The predominance of head injuries is a result, in part, of young children's higher center of gravity, which causes them to tumble head first, for example, over the side of a crib.

Patients with fractures were hospitalized in 14% of cases, and children younger than 6 months of age were three times more likely to be hospitalized than older children.

McKenzie Pediatrics would like to help inform parents about the dangers of cribs, and to educate as to the ways to make these devices as safe as possible.

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The following are important tips for crib safety. Keep in mind that despite the potential perils, cribs are still the safest location for sleeping infants because there have been many more suffocation deaths reported for infants sleeping in adult beds and other alternate surfaces:

- Do not use old, broken, or modified cribs. Cribs older than 10 years old likely do not meet current safety standards.
- Avoid drop-side cribs. Use a wide, short stepstool to better access the crib to place or retrieve your baby.
- If you currently have a drop-side crib, call its manufacturer to request an immobilizer kit. Follow the link for a list of manufacturers: <http://www.cpsc.gov/onsafety/2010/12/crib-immobilizers-who-to-call/>
- Check the CPSC website (listed below) to see if your present crib has been recalled for safety concerns.
  
- Use only a mattress that fits snugly in the crib so your baby cannot slip in between the sides of the crib
- Do not add extra mattresses to a crib
- Never put pillows or cushions in a crib
- Never put comforters, quilts, or sheepskins in your baby's crib. They can cover your baby's face, even if she is lying on her back.

- Avoid fluffy, pillow-like crib bumpers, which may look adorable but pose a suffocation risk for infants. If you must use a bumper pad, make certain it is thin and firm, with no long ties that might strangle.
- Avoid stuffed toys in a crib, until your baby is at least one year of age
- Be aware that bulky items left in the crib could be used as a step for climbing out when your older infant or toddler is able to stand.
- Don't hang anything with strings or ribbon over cribs
- Never place a crib nearby a window with blind cords or curtain cords. Be mindful of the baby monitor cords and their potential for causing strangulation.
- Inspect all cribs, even if new, for strangulation and entrapment hazards, such as gaps between loose components, broken slats, and other parts.
- Proper assembly of a crib is paramount. Follow the instructions provided and make certain all parts are installed correctly. Do not hesitate to call the manufacturer if you have questions about assembly.
- Make sure the crib has no raised corner posts or cutouts. Loose clothing can get snagged on these and strangle your baby
- The slats on the crib should be no more than 2-3/8ths inches apart. Widely spaced slats (such as common with older cribs) can trap small heads.
- Tighten all the screws, bolts, and other hardware securely to prevent the crib from collapsing.

For MORE great information about cribs and crib safety, check out the US Consumer Products Safety Commission weblink on cribs: <http://www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html>

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The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) voted unanimously in December 2010 to approve new mandatory standards for full-size and non-full-size baby cribs as mandated by the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (CPSIA). The federal crib standards had not been updated in nearly 30 years and these new rules are expected to usher in a safer generation of cribs.

Once they become effective, the mandatory crib standards will: (1) stop the manufacture and sale of dangerous, traditional drop-side cribs; (2) make mattress supports stronger; (3) make crib hardware more durable; and (4) make safety testing more rigorous.

Effective June 2011, cribs manufactured, sold, or leased in the United States must comply with the new federal standards. Effective 24 months after the rule is published, child care facilities, such as family child care homes and infant Head Start centers, and places of public accommodation, such as hotels and motels, must have compliant cribs in their facilities.

For the CPSC Final Report on its new rules for crib safety (December 28, 2010), follow the link: <http://www.cpsc.gov/businfo/frnotices/fr11/cribfinal.pdf>