

G1212
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Child Care Furnishings Safety Checklist

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This publication presents information about the selection and evaluation of children's furniture for safety features. For more information on safety and children see: G1213, Child Care Environment General Safety Checklist, and G1643, Child Care Environment Room-by-Room Safety Checklist.

Use the following checklist when evaluating potential new or used children's furniture purchases, donated items or existing furnishings for children. This is only a guideline; be sure to consider other safety factors. Furniture for children should be sized for their use.

A child's environment should allow for exploration, experiences and learning; however, it must be safe too. Accidents are the leading cause of death in children ages 1 to 14, and the leading cause of disability in children older than 1 year of age, according to the Centers for Disease Control (1999). Each year in the United States, 12 million to 14 million children (or one in four) under 15 years of age need medical attention because of accidental injury.

Many accidents involve children and nursery furniture and equipment. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) lists walkers or jumpers as the nursery equipment most often involved in accidents, and incidents continue to increase. CPSC reports that on average per year, 21,300 children needed hospital emergency treatment because of accidents with walkers. Consumers Union reports that an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 people per year are injured when furniture tips over. Of those injured, most are children.

The National Safety Council reports that most nursery furnishings accidents occur because of a lack of supervision or product misuse. The council blames unsafe features of older furniture that do not meet the 1974 federal safety standards as part of the problem.

Being a child care provider is a major responsibility. It means providing a safe environment for and protecting the children in your care so they can explore their world and develop trust. Parents and child care providers need to know about potential hazards in a child's environment. Often, these hazards involve misused or poorly designed products.

Child Care Nursery Equipment Safety Checklist

Smooth, washable surfaces that can be easily cleaned and sanitized are important. Look for the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) or the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) labels on high chairs. Look for the JPMA certification seal also on play yards, strollers, walkers, carriages, gates and expandable enclosures. Visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Web page at www.cpsc.gov for recalls on nursery furniture and other product safety information.

Bassinets and cradles

- Bottom is sturdy with a wide, stable base.
- Screws and bolts are secure. (Check regularly.)
- Legs have working locks to prevent accidental folding.
- Mattress fits snugly with no gaps against the sides.

Bunk Beds

- Mattresses and foundations are sturdy to avoid collapse.
- Areas that may trap or strangle children (such as between guardrail and mattress or bed and wall) are not present.
- Children are not in danger of falling from top bunk.
- Ladders are sturdy and easy for children to climb, with handles present.
- Beds are solid, stable and will not tip or collapse under weight.

Changing tables

- Drawers or shelves are accessible without leaving the baby unattended.
- Safety straps are in good shape and will prevent baby from falling. Never leave the baby unattended.
- Table is stable and will not tip over.

Cribs

- Slats are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart.
- None of the slats is missing or cracked.
- Mattress fits snugly.

- Mattress support attaches securely to the head and foot-boards.
- Top corner posts are no higher than 1/16-inch to reduce the possibility of entanglement of clothing or cords around the neck.
- Drop-side latches hold sides securely in raised position.
- Infants cannot release the drop-side latches.
- All screws or bolts that secure crib components are present and tight. (Check regularly.)
- Crib is not set up near curtains or drapery cords.
- Only children who are shorter than 35 inches use the crib.
- Even some children shorter than 35 inches may be able to climb out of the crib. Some cribs are now made that convert into a youth bed.
- Suspended crib gyms or hanging toys that could strangle or choke children are not present.
- Ensure that lead-based paint is not present on older cribs.

Gates and enclosures

- Openings are too small to entrap a child's head. (Do not buy or use accordion-style gates or gates that have an expandable enclosure with large V's along the top edge or internal diamond-shaped openings.)
- Pressure bar or other fastener is sturdy enough so children cannot fall or push through gate.

High chairs

- Waist and crotch straps should attach to the chair – not the tray.
- Tray locks securely.
- Buckles on straps are easy to fasten.
- Base is wide for stability, and chair does not easily tip over.
- Caps or plugs on tubing are secure to prevent children from pulling them off and choking themselves.
- Locking device is effective to keep the chair from collapsing if it is the folding type.
- Chair sits away from table, counter or other surface so that a child cannot push off of it.

Hook-on chairs

- Restraint system will secure a child.
- Clamp locks onto the table for added security.
- Caps or plugs on tubing are secure to prevent children from pulling them off and choking themselves.
- Chair is set up where the child cannot push off with feet.

Infant carriers

- Base is wide and sturdy and does not skid easily.
- Safety belts are strong and adequate.
- Support devices on back are secure.
- Carrier is not used as a car seat unless it is designated as converting to a car seat. Some car seats are designed to convert to infant carriers.

Playpens

- Side is never left in the down position on a drop-side mesh playpen or mesh crib. (See product's warning label.)
- Mesh has small weave (less than 1/4-inch openings).
- Mesh does not have tears, holes or loose threads.
- Mesh attaches securely to top rail and floor plate.
- Top rail cover has no tears or holes.
- Slats in wooden playpen are no more than 2 3/8 inches apart.
- Staples are secure and none is missing or loose.
- Suffocation, strangulation or choking hazards, such as soft pillows, floppy toys or loose plastic sheeting, are not present.
- Locking devices are effective to prevent accidental folding.
- Only a few toys are placed in playpen at a time to keep children from climbing on them and falling out.

Strollers

- Base is wide to prevent tipping, and it does not tip easily in any seat position.
- Seat belts and crotch strap attach securely to frame.
- Seat belt buckle is easy to fasten and unfasten.
- Brakes lock the wheel(s) securely.
- Basket, if present, is low on the back and located directly over or in front of rear wheels for stability.

Walkers

- Do not use. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has studied walker safety. Some states have banned the use of walkers in child care facilities. Canada currently bans the sale of baby walkers.

There are many features to examine in selecting safer furnishings and equipment for children's use. The above are a few of many features to look for as you select furnishings and equipment with children's safety in mind.

To receive safety alerts or to report product hazards, write or call:

**Consumer Product Safety Commission
(CPSC) Washington, D.C. 20207
(800) 638-2772**

Web site: www.cpsc.gov

To report a safety problem with a product:

www.cpsc.gov/talk.html

To receive email subscription to safety warnings and recalls:

www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.asp

Resources

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care. Performance Standards for Out-of Home Child Care. Chapter 5. Facilities, supplies, equipment and transportation. [Online]. Available:

<http://nrc/uchsc.edu/cfoc/index.html>

National Institutes of Health and U.S. National Library of Medicine. Medline Plus. (2006).

www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/childsafety.html

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (2006). *Child Safety Publications.* [Online]. Available:

www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/chld_sfy.html

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Home Safety

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