
Planning for Baby -- Crib Safety Tips

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Your baby will spend a lot of time sleeping. It is important to make sure that the crib is safe and where your baby is comfortable.

Crib Design

- Dispose of antique cribs with decorative cutouts, corner posts, or lead paint.
- The space between the slats should be no more than 2-3/8 inches to prevent infants from getting their heads stuck between them. Cribs manufactured after 1974 must meet this and other strict safety standards.
- The corner posts should be the same height as the end panels or less than 1/16 of an inch higher than the end panels.
- No cut-out areas on the headboard or footboard so a baby's head cannot get trapped.
- The top rails of crib sides, in their raised position, should be at least 26 inches above the top of the mattress support at its lowest position.
- As soon as the child can pull him- or herself to a standing position, set and keep the mattress at its lowest position. Stop using the crib once the height of the top rails is less than three-fourths of the child's height.
- Always assemble baby furniture according to instructions and continually check for sturdiness.
- Make sure no lead-based paint is used.



Mattress

- The mattress should fit snugly into the crib with no gaps. If two adult fingers can be placed between the mattress and any part of the crib, immediately replace the mattress.
- Do not use plastic packaging materials, such as dry cleaning bags, as mattress covers. Plastic film can cling to a child's face and should never be in or near the crib.

- Put your baby to sleep on his or her back or side in a crib with a firm, flat mattress and no soft bedding. Talk to your pediatrician about which sleeping position is best for the child.
- Use only a fitted bottom sheet specifically made for crib use.

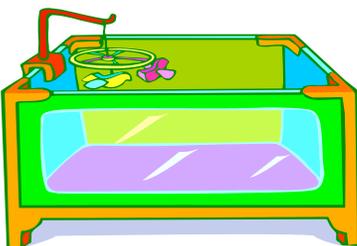
Crib Hardware

- The drop side(s) of the crib should require two distinct actions or a minimum force of 10 pounds with one action to release the latch or the locks. This prevents an accidental release by the child.
- The crib hardware should be checked for disengaged, broken, bent, or loose pieces. Make special checks of the mattress support hangers and brackets. If they are insecure the mattress could drop and seriously injure baby. The hardware and the crib should be smooth and free of sharp edges, points, and rough surfaces.



Crib Accessories

- Do not use pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, pillow-like bumper pads or pillow-like stuffed toys in the crib.
- Damaged teething rails should be fixed, replaced, or removed immediately.



- When the child is 5 months old or begins to push up onto hands and knees or can pull him- or herself up, remove mobiles and crib gyms that hang over or across the crib to prevent possible entanglement.
- Keep the crib clear of plastic sheets, pillows, and large stuffed animals or toys. These can suffocate children or can enable youngsters to climb out of the crib.
- Any loose or torn cloth or vinyl items should be replaced or repaired immediately.
- Consider using a sleeper instead of a blanket.

- If you use a blanket, place your baby with feet towards the foot of the crib. Tuck a thin blanket around the crib mattress, covering baby only as high as his or her chest.

Environment Safety

- Do not place the crib next to a window. Drapery and blind cords pose an entanglement hazard and window screens are not intended to keep a child in, only insects out.
- Install smoke detectors. Follow the manufacturer's directions for placing them. Check them at least once a month to make sure both the battery and the smoke detector itself are in good working condition.

• Lead is a health hazard, especially to young children. It can be found in dust and soil off busy roadways, in old paint on walls, toys, and furniture and sometimes in paint on new imported items. If you think your child has taken in leaded paint or soil, or if you need help with identifying or removing lead paint, call the National Safety Council's National Lead Information Center at (800) 424-5323.

- Do not place your baby on a waterbed.
- Never leave baby unattended on a bed. Put your baby in a crib or bassinet if you have to put him or her down.
- Never let your child bounce on a bed.

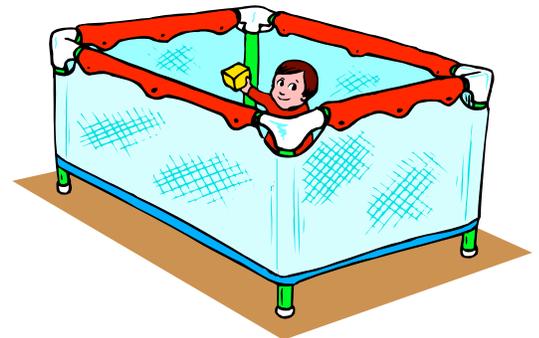


Mesh-sided Cribs or Playpens

- Use mesh that is less than 1/4 inch in size (smaller than the tiny buttons on a baby's clothing) .
- Use mesh with no tears, holes, or loose threads that could entangle a baby.
- Mesh should be securely attached to the top rail and floor plate.
- The top rail cover should not have tears or holes.
- If staples are used, be sure none of them are missing, loose, or exposed.

Resources for Crib Safety

- Consumer Product Safety Commission
<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSPUB/PUBS/5030.html>
- Consumer Reports web site on Cribs,
<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/babies-kids/baby-toddler/nursery-furniture/cribs/cribs/overview/cribs-ov.htm>



Remember, these are the basics guidelines to get you started. As you become more comfortable and have a set routine, you will have a better idea of exactly what you will need and not need. This one of a set of fact sheets for Planning for Baby. You may also want to see the series Children and Family Finances.

This fact sheet was revised from Planning for Baby – Consumer Issues by Hayhoe, C., Jamison, S. Dillard, A. F., and Chase, M.
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