

Crib Safety: A Parent's Guide

Keeping your child safe and secure in his or her crib can help you *and* your child sleep well at night. As you prepare his or her crib, it's important to keep best safety practices in mind. While modern cribs are designed to accommodate the latest safety requirements, parents often have to make adjustments to the crib based upon its layout and to ensure



reliable use. As your child matures it's important to check the security of the crib on a regular basis to keep up with maintenance to the furniture, as well as adapting it to his or her changing behavior. Proper crib safety will ensure your child remains comfortable, safe and secure.

Securing Your Infant Crib

The first factor to consider in crib safety is the placement of the crib itself. Keep in mind that as your child begins to grow, he or she will become more adventurous over time. As a result, you should make sure the crib doesn't provide access to certain objects within reach such as lamps, hangings, light fixtures or chords which can pose a potential danger to your child. Instead, place your child's crib in an area where it's relatively isolated from other segments to limit the potential damages or dangers posed by placement.

Even when you have your crib in a safe place, make sure all items within the crib are safe and don't pose potential choking hazards. Many children are comforted by mobiles which provide pleasant music and movement for young children. Modern mobiles have limited strings (less than six inches) to limit the safety risk. If you're using an older or homemade mobile make sure it meets all proper safety requirements.

Once you've made sure the child's crib is securely placed, always check the exterior of the crib meets modern safety standards. In particular, the crib slats should be no more than 2 3/8 inches apart – otherwise, they may pose a potential hazard. While modern cribs are designed to meet these standards always double check older or antique cribs for safety. You want to make sure the openings on the side of the crib won't cause him or her to get stuck and there are no posts which cause potential dangers. Additionally, padded bumpers on your new crib are no longer recommended by Health Canada (<http://www.hc->

sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/cribs-lits_enfants-eng.php). Ideally, you want your new crib built according to the latest consumer safety standards.

Another important factor to keep in mind is the risk of your child falling out of the crib. You can ensure this by having the mattress at a relatively low level (particularly when your child can sit-up) with a crib that sits closer to the ground. Importantly, the railing should be fully secure to limit any potential risk of a child falling out of the side. When deciding upon a crib and accessories make sure you fully account for any risks that can incur during a fall.

After taking time to ensure your child is secure in his or her crib, also make sure your child is comfortable. The bedding and mattress in the crib should be safely secured to the furniture. When using a blanket always opt for a baby blanket which reduces the risk of overheating or getting suffocated. At the same time, you'll want to use special crib sheets which fit securely into the area and limit any potential risks. The baby's mattress should fit securely and should be relatively firm while also providing for your child's comfort.

Check Lists for Safe Baby Furniture

Young infants are at risk from many factors in their cribs including SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome), suffocation, discomfort, fever and falling. You'll want to make sure you check your baby furniture so it meets all required standards and is fully comfortable for your child. When installing and assembling the crib spend extra time to ensure all hardware and screws are fully tightened and put together properly. A proper crib shouldn't have large slits or posts which can pose potential hazards. Similarly, mesh cribs should have small openings less than ¼ inch without any compromised material which could cause damages. When shopping for an infant crib make sure all the safety requirements are met, and newer cribs provide the single best way of ensuring compliance.

Look for cribs that meet the latest safety standards and are manufactured with safety in mind. This means the paint has been checked for toxicity, the construction has been double checked for accuracy and the sides have a firm locking latch to ensure safe operations. Organizations such as the Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association provide regional standards for baby furniture, and purchasing a product with the JPMA seal can ensure these requirements are met. With a combination of smart parenting and purchasing decisions you can help your child have a safe, enjoyable experience.

To comfort your child use a firm mattress and a baby blanket (sleeper) to provide extra comfort. While it may seem like a good idea to fill the crib with pillows, comforters and soft toys, these can pose potential dangers to your child. When caregivers or relatives interact with your infant make sure they are fully aware of all risks. Taking the extra step when it comes to crib safety can help ensure your child remains safe and secure at all times. Babies should be placed on their backs in a way that provides them comfort with a thin blanket for warmth. Importantly, your baby should always be able to fully breathe so his or her head should be uncovered at all times.

Following these guidelines as well as working closely with your pediatrician and other parents can help provide you with a successful roadmap. Since each child and home is unique, you'll want to tailor these requirements to your individual use while following best medical and safety practices. Your baby's doctor can make informed recommendations in terms of the adjustments you may need to make. Making smart, informed decisions can help ensure your child has a safe, comfortable experience.