Daycare and Nursery Equipment Safety

There are hundreds of types of nursery equipment on the market intended to be used with children. However, many of these products are used incorrectly, poorly designed, or over time their condition has deteriorated to a level where they are no longer safe. Many organizations also will accept nursery equipment that is donated. However, the same problems arise from using the donated equipment; and many of the items will be accepted without any of the manufacturers' paper work. Without this paper work, the piece of equipment may not be used according to the manufacturer's recommendations and could jeopardize the safety of the children using the equipment.

This fact sheet outlines some of the important safety requirements of various types of nursery equipment. The requirements can help ensure that your current equipment is safe and that any new or donated nursery equipment does not have any safety hazards that could jeopardize the safety of the children using the equipment.

Bassinets and Cradles

- This type of equipment should have a wide base to prevent it from tipping over.
- The mattress should fit snuggly within the bed frame. Children can suffocate in the spaces formed between mattresses or from ill-fitting mattresses.
- The rocking mechanism should have a locking device.
- Once a child can rollover or pull themselves up, bassinets or cradles should no longer be used.
- They should not contain any beads or other decorative material that could become a choking hazard.

Changing tables

- A protective barrier (rail or solid wood) should be on all four sides.
- A safety belt or strap should be provided to prevent the baby from failing.
- Changing tables should be properly equipped with drawers or shelves for storage. This will prevent accidentally leaving the baby on the table to retrieve supplies.



This photo is an example of a safe changing table equipped with four sides and an appropriate storage area.

Cribs

Safety standards aim to keep children safe in their cribs and prevent deaths resulting from detaching crib drop-sides and faulty or defective hardware. The following safety features should be

followed concerning cribs:

- Do not use, resell, donate or give away a crib that was manufactured prior to 2011 when
- new crib standards were implemented.
- The mattress should fit snugly next to the crib so that there are no gaps. If two adult fingers can be placed between the mattress and the crib, the mattress should immediately be replaced. Children can suffocate in the spaces formed between mattresses or from ill-fitting mattresses.
- There should be no missing, loose, broken or improperly installed screws, brackets or other hardware on the crib or mattress support. Discontinue use of the crib if it is not structurally sound.
- There should be no more than 2 3/8 inches between crib slats, so a baby's body cannot fit through the slats. There also should be no missing or cracked slats.
- None of the corner posts should be over 1/16 inch high so a baby's clothing cannot catch.
- Neither the headboard nor footboard should have cutouts where the baby's head could become entrapped.
- As soon as a child can pull themselves up 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.
- Remove pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, pillow like stuffed toys, and other products from the crib. These items increase the risk of suffocation, strangulation and entrapment.
- Do not use large plastic bags or similar items as mattress covers. Plastic can cling to the children's faces and present a suffocation hazard.
- Mobiles or crib gyms should be removed to reduce the chances of an entanglement hazard when children reach five months or begin to show signs of being able to push or pull themselves up.

Gates and Enclosures

- There are two main categories of gates: screw fixing and pressure fitting.
    - **Screw Fitting Stair Gates** – These gates should be the only type of gate placed at the top of stairs, but they also can be put in doorways. This type of gate must be properly attached to the wall. However, if properly installed, the gate cannot come loose and there is no bar across the bottom, which can present a tripping hazard at the top of a set of stairs.
    - **Pressure Fitting Stair Gates** – These types of gates expand outward until they become wedged into the doorframe. They are easy to install and don't require the need for screws or permanent adhesives. These gates are ideal for separating rooms that are on the same level, but they must never be used at the top of stairs.
- Most gates are only suitable for children up to the age of 24 months, but users are encouraged to consult the manufacturers' recommendations.
- The U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns of an entrapment and strangulation hazard that exists with accordion-style baby gates manufactured prior to February 1985.

Highchairs

- Highchairs should have a wide base for stability, should be equipped with a crotch strap that is independent of the tray, and the buckle should easily fasten and unfasten.
- The tray should securely lock in place.

Pacifiers

- Only one piece pacifiers should be used to avoid choking on small parts.
- The shield should be large enough so it can't fit into the baby's mouth. It should at least be 1-1/2 inches wide and equipped with air holes.
- Ribbon, string, yarn, or similar items should NOT be tied to the pacifier.
- All pacifiers should be regularly inspected for cracks in the rubber or loose parts.
- Any damaged pacifiers should be properly disposed of immediately.
- Pacifiers should be cleaned according to manufacturer's recommendations.

Playpens

- Only use the mattress that has been provided by the manufacturer. Children can suffocate in the spaces formed between mattresses or from ill-fitting mattresses.
- If using a mesh-sided playpen, make sure the mesh is less than 1/4 inch in size and that it is attached securely. This will help prevent strangulation.
- Do not use playpens with catch points, such as protruding hardware.
- Make sure the top rails of the units lock into place automatically.
- Playpens should be in good shape. Using a modified or improperly repaired unit can create hazards.
- Never place a child in a playpen with soft bedding, such as quilts, comforters, or pillows. These items increase the risk of SIDS and suffocation.

Strollers

- Strollers should have a wide base to prevent it from tipping over.
- Strollers should be equipped with a frame-locking mechanism that will prevent the stroller from accidentally collapsing.
- The brakes should securely lock the wheels.
- Strollers should be equipped with a seatbelt and crotch strap that are securely attached to the frame.

Toy Chests

- Chests should not be equipped with latches that could entrap the child.
- The chest should be equipped with ventilation holes.
- Any chest equipped with a lid should have spring loaded hinges that will support the lid in any position and keep it from slamming.

Walkers

- Be careful of walkers, as they can roll downstairs, which can cause broken bones and head injuries. This is how most children get hurt.
- Children have a greater chance of getting burned while in a walker, as they can reach higher. A cup of hot coffee on the table, pot handles on the stove, a radiator, fireplace, or space heater can easily be reached by babies in walkers.
- A child can fall into a pool, bathtub or toilet while in a walker and potentially drown.
- Fingers and toes can easily be pinched, as they can get caught between the walker and furniture.



This photo is an example of an unacceptable walker. It is not acceptable because 1) it can fit through a standard doorway; 2) it is not designed to stop at the edge of stairs; and 3) it can easily tip over. Babies using these walkers can be seriously injured or killed.

Photo courtesy of CPSC.

Protecting Children is Key

Children should be well protected when in the nursery. Parents should not have to worry about their children's safety when they leave them. By following the recommended tips in this fact sheet, your organization will be better equipped to make sure babies are kept as safe as possible in the nursery.

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