

# Make Baby's Room Safe: Parent Checklist



Every home is different, and *no checklist is complete and appropriate for every household*, however use this checklist to help ensure that the bedrooms in your home are safer for your child.

## Changing Table

Although a changing table makes it easier to dress and diaper your baby, falls from such a high surface can be serious. Don't trust your vigilance alone to prevent falls; you should also consider the following recommendations.

- Choose a sturdy, stable changing table with a 2-inch (5-cm) guardrail around all four sides.
- The top of the changing table pad should be concave, so that the middle is slightly lower than the sides.
- Buckle the safety strap, but don't depend on it alone to keep your child secure. Always keep a hand on your baby. Never leave a child unattended on a dressing table, even for a moment, even if he is strapped.
- Keep diapering supplies within your reach—but out of your child's reach—so you don't have to leave your baby's side to get them. Never let him play with a powder container. If he opens and shakes it, he's likely to inhale particles of powder, which can injure his lungs.
- If you use disposable diapers, store them out of your child's reach and cover them with clothing when he wears them. Children can suffocate if they tear off pieces of the plastic liner and swallow them.

## Suffocation Prevention

- Do not use baby or talcum powders on the baby. If inhaled, talcum-containing powders can cause severe lung damage and breathing problems in babies.
- Keep the crib free of all small objects (safety pins, small parts of toys, etc.) that she could swallow.
- Never leave plastic bags or wrappings where your baby can reach them.
- Don't have your baby sleep in your own bed next to you. Keep her in her crib.
- Instead of using loose blankets that your baby could get tangled in, dress her in appropriate-weight sleepwear (like a wearable blanket or sleep sack).
- Don't allow your baby to sleep on her stomach, nor should she sleep on a soft comforter or pillow. Place her to sleep only on her back.

## Necklaces and Cords

- Don't let strings or cords dangle in or anywhere near the crib.
- Don't attach pacifiers, medallions, or other objects to the crib or body with a cord.

- Don't place a string or necklace around the baby's neck.
- Don't use clothing with drawstrings.

## Cribs

Your baby usually will be unattended when in his or her crib, so this should be a totally safe environment. Falls are the most common injury associated with cribs, even though they are the easiest to prevent. Children are most likely to fall out of the crib when the mattress is raised too high for their height, or not lowered properly as they grow.

Use a crib manufactured after June 2011, when the current safety standards banning the manufacture or sale of drop-side rail cribs became effective. There is a good chance that an older crib no longer meets all the current safety standards, especially if it has a drop side.

### **No matter what the age of your crib, inspect it carefully for the following features:**

- Slats should be no more than  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches (6 cm) apart so a child's head cannot become trapped between them. Widely spaced slats can allow an infant's legs and body to fall through but will trap the infant's head, which can result in death.
- There should be no decorative cut-outs in the headboard or footboard, as your child's head or limbs could become trapped in them.
- If the crib has corner posts, they should be flush with the end panels, or they should be very, very tall (such as posts on a canopy bed). Clothing and ribbons can catch on tall corner posts and strangle an infant.
- All screws, bolts, nuts, plastic parts, and other hardware should be present and original equipment. Never substitute original parts with something from a hardware store; replacement parts must be obtained from the manufacturer. They must be tightly in place to prevent the crib from coming apart; a child's activity can cause the crib to collapse, trapping and suffocating her.
- Before each assembly and weekly thereafter, inspect the crib for damage to hardware, loose joints, missing parts, or sharp edges. Do not use a crib if any parts are missing or broken.

### **You can prevent other crib hazards by observing the following guidelines:**

- The mattress should be the same size as the crib so there are no gaps to trap arms, body, or legs. If you can insert more than two fingers between the mattress and the sides or ends of the crib, the crib and mattress combination should not be used.
- If you purchase a new mattress, remove and destroy all plastic wrapping material that comes with it, because it can suffocate a child.
- Before your baby can sit, lower the mattress of the crib to the level where he cannot fall out either by leaning against the side or by pulling himself over it. Set the mattress at its lowest position before your child learns to stand. The most common falls occur when a baby tries to climb out, so move your child to another bed when he is 35 inches (89 cm) tall, or when the height of the side rail is less than three-quarters of his height (approximately nipple level).
- Periodically check the crib to be sure there are no rough edges or sharp points on the metal parts, and no splinters or cracks in the wood. If you notice tooth marks on the railing, cover the wood with a plastic strip (available at most children's furniture stores).
- Do not use bumper pads in cribs. There is no evidence that they prevent injuries, and there is a possible risk of suffocation, strangulation, or entrapment. Infant deaths in cribs have been associated with bumper pads. In addition, toddlers can use a bumper guard to help them climb and fall out.
- Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed animals, and other soft products should not be placed in a crib. Babies have suffocated on such items in the crib.

- If you hang a mobile over your child's crib, be sure it is securely attached to the side rails. Hang it high enough so your baby cannot reach it to pull it down, and remove it when he is able to get up on his hands and knees, or when he reaches five months, whichever comes first.
- Crib gyms are not recommended, as infants and toddlers may injure themselves falling forward onto the gym or pulling the gym down on top of their body.
- To prevent the most serious of falls and to keep children from getting caught in cords from hanging window blinds or draperies and strangling, don't place a crib—or any other child's bed—near a window. The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends using cordless window coverings if possible.

## Other Bedroom Items

- Keep **night-lights** away from drapes or bedding where they could start a fire. Buy only cool night-lights that do not get hot.
- Install **smoke alarms** outside every bedroom (or any area where someone sleeps), in furnace areas, and on every level of your home, including the basement. Buy alarms with long-life lithium batteries. Standard batteries should be changed every year. Test alarms every month to make sure they are working properly.
- Install **CO detectors** on each floor of your home. CO is a toxic gas that has no taste, no color, and no odor. It comes from appliances or heaters that burn gas, oil, wood, propane, or kerosene.
- Make sure **window guards** are secured to prevent a child from falling out the window.
- The best **toy chest** is a box or basket without a lid. However, if it has a lid, make sure it has safe hinges that hold the lid open and do not pinch. The chest should also have air holes just in case your child gets trapped inside.
- Use a **cool-mist humidifier** or **vaporizer** to avoid burns. Clean it according to manufacturer instructions to avoid bacteria and mold growth.

Last Updated – 1/24/2019

Source – Adapted from Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5, 6th Edition (Copyright © 2015 American Academy of Pediatrics)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Make-Babys-Room-Safe.aspx>