

Crib Safety and Inspection

by Nick Gromicko

Defective cribs, especially hand-me-down and homemade models, can pose serious hazards to young children, including strangulation, entrapment and overheating. Government manufacturing standards set in 1973 have greatly improved crib safety, yet defective cribs continue to be responsible for the highest child injury rates of any nursery item. In fact, approximately 50 infants each year are killed and another 9,000 are injured in crib-related accidents in the U.S. To prevent an avoidable tragedy, parents should check their child's crib to ensure against the following defects:

- Screws, bolts and hardware may not be missing, broken or loose.
- Slats cannot be more than 2-3/8 inches apart, which is about the width of a soda can, and none of them should be loose or broken. Older cribs are especially prone to this defect.
- The corner posts cannot extend more than 1/16-inch above the headboard and footboard.
- The mattress must be firm, and it should fit snugly inside the crib so that it does not easily release from the posts. This prevents the baby from getting stuck between the mattress and the crib.
- Check the overall condition. Look for any sharp points or edges (such as those on protruding rivets, nuts, bolts and knobs), and any wood surfaces that have splits, splinters or cracks.
- Lead paint was outlawed in the United States in 1978, so painted cribs made before this year should be tested for lead, or avoided altogether.
- There should be no decorative cutouts in the headboard or footboard in which the baby's head or limbs could get trapped.
- Decorative knobs and cornerposts should not be higher than 1/16-inch so that a baby's clothing cannot catch on them.
- The baby should sleep in a sleeper, as opposed to a blanket. Soft bedding and blankets are suffocation hazards. They may also cause the baby to overheat, so it's best to remove all pillows, comforters and quilts from the crib.



- If the crib has ribbons or bows, make sure they are tightly fastened, and no longer than 8 inches.
- Mobiles are for looking at, not touching. Their parts present a choking hazard and can cause the baby to become entangled. Make sure your baby cannot reach the mobile, and when he is old enough to crawl, the mobile should be removed from the crib. While newer mobiles are designed so that they cannot be reached, the risks still exist for older mobiles, homemade mobiles, and mobiles not specifically designed for cribs.

Crib Recalls

Cribs that were manufactured between 2000 and 2009 may be included in a voluntary recall issued by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in June 2010. Seven firms will provide consumers with free repair kits to remedy more than 2 million defective cribs, and they advise consumers not to attempt to fix these cribs using homemade remedies. Consumers should contact manufacturers directly to learn the appropriate remedy. These manufacturers are listed below, along with the number of cribs they recalled.

- 750,000 Jenny Lind drop-side cribs distributed by Evenflo, Inc.;
- 747,000 Delta drop-side cribs. Delta is also urging parents to check all fixed and drop-side cribs that use wooden stabilizer bars to support the mattress. The company says the bars can be inadvertently installed upside-down, causing the mattress platform to collapse;
- 306,000 Bonavita, Babi Italia and ISSI drop-side cribs manufactured by LaJobi, Inc.;
- 130,000 Jardine drop-side cribs imported and sold by Toys R Us;
- 156,000 Million Dollar Baby drop-side cribs;
- 50,000 Simmons drop-side cribs; and
- 40,000 to 50,000 Child Craft brand (now Foundations Worldwide, Inc.) stationary-side cribs, and an unknown number of drop-side cribs.

In summary, parents should ensure a safe sleeping environment for their young children by learning about defective conditions commonly found in cribs.