

## Nursery Equipment

### Nursery equipment & injury: the statistics

Each year in Australia, injuries involving nursery equipment result in:

- 6,500 children under three years of age needing medical treatment (125 a week)
- 540 children being admitted to hospital (10 a week)
- 10 child deaths

One in five injuries to 'under fives' are associated with nursery furniture.

Injuries requiring hospitalisation are overwhelmingly the result of falls. These account for nearly two out of three nursery product related injuries (65%). Injuries due to trapped or crushed fingers, toes or limbs are also common.

Deaths are most often of babies who strangle or smother in cots or prams.



#### 'Real life' cases

- ♥ Six-month-old on change table. Mother turned away to get clean nappy. Baby rolled off table, suffering concussion. "First time she rolled."
- ♥ Four-month-old caught head between bars of cot and the mattress; suffocated.
- ♥ Boy, 20 months, suddenly stood up in highchair (no shoulder harness) and fell out; concussion.
- ♥ Twelve-month-old in cot became entangled in nearby curtain drawstring; strangled.
- ♥ Six-month-old girl sleeping in pram in quiet corner of lounge. When mother looked, child had moved back and become trapped in the head of the pram; asphyxiated.
- ♥ Ten-month-old in baby walker. Child changed direction and tipped over change in floor level before mum could reach him; skull fracture.

### Nursery equipment & safety

Most nursery injuries are associated with common types of equipment, such as prams, cots, high chairs, baby walkers, strollers, change tables and baby exercisers (bouncers).

Injuries happen for a number of reasons, including:

- Basic design flaws of the equipment (e.g. absence of easy-to-use harness)
- Poor maintenance, especially on older equipment
- The way in which equipment is used (e.g. harness in pram is not used)
- Failure of the equipment (e.g. part comes away)

### Cots

Nearly half of cot related injuries involve children falling out of the cot.

Smaller numbers involve the failure of the cot, e.g. the side falls down, the base falls out, or the screws come loose.

A small number of strangling deaths of young children occur in cots each year. Often poorly designed or maintained, faulty or modified cots are involved.

#### Safety

Check your cot has a label showing it complies with the Australian Standard (AS 2172). Look for:

- Spaces between the bars that are 50-85mm apart
- A mattress that fits snugly all the way around (no gaps wider than your index finger)
- A minimum of 500mm between the top of the mattress and the top of the cot sides (preferably 600mm)
- No knobs or protrusions to snag clothing
- Dropside mechanisms that is secure and easy for an adult to use, but not a child
- Think about where the cot will be positioned. Ensure it is away from dangerous items such as heaters and curtain cords
- Ensure the cot is well maintained



### Change tables

Babies are generally injured after rolling to the side and falling off. Falls occur in children as young as three months, and can result in concussion or fractures.

Injuries often occur when a carer turns or moves away from the table to get something. Carers' often express surprise, e.g. "she has never rolled over before" or "he usually lies quietly".

#### Safety

- Choose a design that reduces the risk of baby rolling off. Look for a hollow shape deep enough to stop baby rolling off, and/or an easy-to-use harness.
- Keep everything you need to change baby close at hand.
- Never leave a baby on the change table. If you need to turn away, keep one hand on baby. If you must leave, take baby with you.

### Portable Cots

There have been a small number of deaths where cots have collapsed, trapping babies.

#### Safety

- Look for a model that meets the (voluntary) Standard AS/NZS 2195:1999 for folding cots.
- When using portable cots, ensure the sides are fully clicked into place and are secure.

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- Check mechanisms regularly for wear.
- Use the cot mattress provided. Ill-fitting mattresses may create spaces where a small baby could be trapped.

## Prams & strollers

Children are injured most often in falls. These commonly involve stairs and steps, a child standing up or falling out, or a pram or stroller tipping over.

Some injuries involve fingers, toes or limbs getting caught in moving parts (e.g. when a stroller collapses or is being folded up).



### Safety

When selecting a pram or stroller use the Australian Standard (AS 2088) as a guide. Look for:

- A stable design, with easy-to-use frame locks
- An easy-to-use five point harness (shoulders, waist, through the legs)
- Parcel containers positioned under the pram or stroller
- Use the harness every time
- Avoid hooking heavy shopping bags over the handles (a common cause of 'tip over' injuries)

Toddler Seats:

- Ensure your pram/stroller is suitable to use with a toddler seat
- Check if the pram has been "tilt tested" with a toddler seat

Note: Prams are NOT recommended for young babies to sleep in. A number of babies have died after wriggling or falling into positions in which they couldn't breathe. Direct (in sight) supervision is necessary.

You may also want to check that the pram/jogger will fit in the boot/cargo space of your car.

## High chairs

Three quarters of injuries are due to falls, often after children stand up or attempt to climb out of or into the chair.

Some injuries involve product failure (e.g. the tray falling off or the harness giving way), or a child becoming entrapped (e.g. a finger getting caught).

### Safety

Select a chair with:

- A strong, stable design
- (If there are wheels) effective, easy-to-use wheel locks
- An easy-to-use five point harness (shoulders, waist, through the legs)
- Consider a model with adjustable height, and use the lowest setting
- Get your child used to the harness from the start, and use it every time



## Baby walkers

There have been efforts to improve the safety of baby walkers, but many children continue to be seriously injured in them every year. Two thirds of injuries are associated with the walker falling down stairs or tipping over (e.g. due to a small change in surface level). A further 20% involve children getting access to hazards such as hot drinks, heaters, irons or cleaners.

Australian regulations require that all baby walkers sold in Australia must meet the American ASTM standard, with wider bases and other features.

Children can move quickly in a walker – up to a metre per second. This increases the chance of children reaching hazards before a parent can catch them. Children also become taller and can reach higher in a walker.

Expert opinion is that walkers do not help in a child's development and may even hinder it when used for long periods.



### Safety

- Kidsafe advises looking for other options to keep babies amused
- Look for an automatic braking mechanism, to prevent it being ridden over a step
- Check that warning labels about safe use are clearly displayed
- Check that there are no sharp edges or points
- Check that your child fits properly into the baby walker
- Block access to dangers like steps and heaters. Check for hazards like dangling kettle cords. Only use in a safe flat area
- Check that it has an optional locking device to immobilise when required
- Always provide close supervision – within an arm's reach and in sight of baby

## Baby bouncers

Most injuries are the result of babies falling in a bouncer from a table or other high surface.

### Safety

- Always use bouncers on the floor.

## Information booklets

For more information on choosing and using nursery furniture safely, contact Kidsafe WA or access the *Keeping Baby Safe - a guide to nursery furniture* & the *Safety in the Home* series from:

[www.docep.wa.gov.au/productsafety](http://www.docep.wa.gov.au/productsafety)

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Child Safety Information Line ☎ 1800 802 244

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