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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Wake-up call: Think twice about using a secondhand crib

With new cribs selling for \$220 to \$1,000, frugal-minded parents may be tempted to pick up a bargain through a secondhand sale or accept a freebie from family or friends.

But caution is advised: Cribs are one of the leading causes of nursery-product related deaths, and older cribs can be especially unsafe. One trade group suggests avoiding cribs more than 10 years old.

Among the safety concerns for cribs of any age: Babies can fall out, become trapped and suffocate or strangle in cribs where parts are missing or loose, or when other dangerous conditions exist. And charming “antique” cribs are more likely than new ones to have lead in the finish.

Eleven million cribs have been involved in 40 recalls since 2007. Most of them remain in circulation because corrective action usually involves repair, not return.

In drop-side cribs — those with sides that can be raised and lowered — the movable side can malfunction or detach, and the gap can turn into a death trap. There were 147 deaths associated with full-size cribs between November 2007 and April 2010, and 35 were due to a crib’s structural problems (34 of those involved entrapment). Since 2000, at least 32 infants or toddlers have died and hundreds of others were injured in drop-side cribs.

In December, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) banned the production and sale of drop side cribs, effective in June. (Child care centers and hotels will have extra time to replace their cribs.) As part of the new safety rules, cribs also will have to pass strict tests to the durability of mattress supports and slats. It will become illegal to re-sell nearly all used cribs because few will meet the stricter standards.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and safety organizations recommend that your baby’s crib has:

- no loose, missing or broken hardware or slats (inspect the crib regularly);
- no more than 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches between the slats — that’s about as wide as a soda can;
- no corner posts more than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch high;
- no cutout designs in the headboard or footboard;
- all joints and parts tightly fitted in place, and the wood smooth and free of splinters; and
- a firm, tight-fitting and well-supported mattress, the same size as the crib.

Only use hardware from the manufacturer when repairing a crib.

The AAP has joined other organizations in a safe sleep initiative. For resources, visit www.keepingbabiesafe.org.

More information on crib safety and recalls can be found at www.healthychildren.org/english/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Choosing-a-Crib.aspx and www.cpsc.gov/info/cribs/index.html.

Finally, it’s not enough to ensure the safety of your home crib. Monitor cribs used at child care centers, and at grandparents’ and sitters’ homes, too.



—Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff

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