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INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Rest easy with these bunk bed safety tips

Bunk beds are great space savers, and children love them. Keep in mind, however, that these beds also can be dangerous.

Every year, nearly 36,000 children are treated in emergency departments due to bunk bed-related injuries, according to a 2008 study. Most of these injuries are to the head and neck.

In addition, injuries from bunk beds usually are worse than injuries from standard beds, reports the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

Half of those injured are children younger than 6 years of age. Therefore, youngsters under this age should never be allowed on the top bunk.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Injury Research and Policy offer the following guidelines to ensure your child sleeps soundly — and safely — in a bunk bed:

- Place bunk beds in the corner of the room so that there are walls on two sides.
- Install guardrails on both sides of the top bunk, and make sure the guardrails rise at least 5 inches above the mattress.
- If there is more than 3.5 inches between the bottom of the mattress and guardrail, add another guardrail board to fill the gap.
- Make sure you use the right size mattresses for the bed frames.



- Add extra slats to support the mattress on the top bunk to prevent it from falling.
- Emphasize to children that they should always use the ladder and not other furniture to climb into or out of the bunk bed.
- Secure the ladder so that it will not slip.
- Install a night light near the ladder so your child can see if getting out of bed during the night.
- Establish a rule that beds are not to be roughhoused on.
- Remove dangerous objects from around the bed.
- Never hang belts, scarves or ropes from the bunkbed, as these items could strangle a child.

— Hilary Rasch

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