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Health Alerts

New federal safety standard OK'd for play yards

A new federal mandatory standard to improve the safety of play yards and prevent child injuries and deaths was approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in July.

Play yards are used as a safe place for children to sleep and play in homes and child care centers as well as while traveling. However, more than 2,100 incidents with play yards were reported to CPSC between November 2007 and December 2011, including 60 fatalities and 170 injuries. Millions of units of about 20 different play yards have been recalled since 1985.

The new federal standard requires that the play yards go through a stability test to prevent the play yard from tipping, entrapment tests to ensure that a child's head or neck cannot become trapped, particularly in the V- or diamond-shaped opening created by fold-down rails, and floor strength tests to ensure structural integrity and prevent children from becoming trapped by the play yard floor.

The new standard also sets minimum height requirements to prevent children from leaving the play yard on their own and requires latch and lock mechanisms to prevent the play yard from folding on a child. The standard will be effective six months after the final rule is published in the *Federal Register*.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that parents check the safety and recall status of their play yards. Parents can further ensure the safety of their children by adhering to product maximum weight guidelines and removing pillows and loose bedding to prevent suffocation, hanging toys to prevent strangling, and boxes or toys that children can use to climb out of the play yard.