

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

Advice when Buying Cots

During the first months of life, your baby will probably spend more time in a cot than anywhere else, so it is important that the cot you choose is safe.

COT SAFETY

Sadly, cot related injuries account for about 20% of all children's injuries involving nursery furniture. Most cot injuries are due to falls from the cot. But cot injuries have also occurred as a result of children's heads or limbs getting trapped between bars and panels or clothing getting caught on protrusions.

AUSTRALIAN STANDARD (AS/NZS 2172)

The safety requirements of the Australian Standard for 'Cots for Household Use' are compulsory and since its introduction has reduced some of the injury risks associated with the construction of cots including the elimination from the cot structure of gaps where a child could become entrapped, and protrusions that could snag a child's clothing.

BEFORE YOU BUY

It is illegal to sell cots that don't meet the Australian Standard. If you are buying a secondhand cot, make sure it complies with the standard.

New costs will have a label confirming that the cot meets the standard. If you find a new cot not labelled, or a cot for sale that doesn't meet the standard contact the Consumer Affairs on 8999 1999 or 1800 019 319.

LOOK FOR A COT WITH THE FOLLOWING DIMENSIONS:

Minimum depth – should be 600mm from the base of the mattress to the top of the cot.

Space between the bars – should be between 50mm and 85mm – this is approximately the breadth of the palm of an adult woman's hand.

Space between the cot sides and the mattress should not be more than 25mm – if a woman can fit the breadth of two fingers between the cot and the mattress, the space is too big.

Finger traps – there should be no spaces which are between 5mm and 12mm wide.

Arm and leg traps – there should be no spaces between 30mm and 50mm wide.

Head traps and fall through hazards – there should be no gaps wider than 85mm.

Protrusions – there should be no protrusions more than 8mm high.

As a guide – the breadth of an adult woman's palm is approximately 75mm. The breadth of an adult woman's index finger is approximately 15mm.

OTHER TIPS

- If possible, buy a standard cot for everyday use.
- Look for fixed-base cots with the lowest possible base.
- Always make sure the mattress fits snugly to within 25mm at the sides and end.
- Make sure there are no more than two legs with castors, or the castors have brakes on them.
- Always follow the manufacturer's assembly instructions (and keep the instructions somewhere safe).
- Double check secondhand cots before you buy one – even if they met the Australian Standard at one time, they may be in need of repair.
- If you are buying a rocking cradle, make sure it has a locking device to prevent it from rocking when unattended, and a tilt limiter to limit the angle of tilt to no more than 10 degrees from the horizontal.

SAFETY AT HOME

- Do not place the cot near windows, heaters or power points. This will reduce the risk of injuries from strangulation (from curtains/cords), falls, burns and electric shocks.
- Repair peeling paint or transfers immediately as a child may swallow and choke on these.
- Remove climbing aids such as large toys, cot bumpers and cushions from the cot once the child can stand. These items can help the child climb out.
- Do not allow small objects that could cause the child to choke to be placed in the cot or anywhere accessible to the child.
- Make sure the space above the cot is free of objects such as pictures or mirrors that could fall on the child.
- Make sure bases on adjustable base cots are moved to their lowest setting as soon as the child is able to sit unaided.
- Do not leave mobiles or toys with stretch/eastic cords in cots.

Make sure electric blankets and hot water bottles are never used for babies or young children.

For further information contact Consumer Affairs

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