

When buying baby furniture, always remember that the safety of the baby is at stake. Do not buy baby furniture just for the sake of saving money; you would risk the safety of the child in return. Be sure to use precaution and examine everything.

## Furniture and Furniture Safety



### High Chairs and Feeding Tables

There are a number of consumer safety standards for high chairs. Nonetheless, there are still a large number of injuries. But these are more often the result of careless use than of poor design.

Many babies stand up in and fall out of high chairs, but this could be prevented by using the restraining straps. Adults often think the feeding tray is sufficient for restraining the baby, but it is not. The tray and the baby can fall together; when this happens, injuries can occur if the baby hits the sharp edges of the overturned tray. Other high chair accidents include finger and hand injuries from the collapse of a chair that folds with the baby in it, cuts to fingers from the pincers on some tray latches, and foot injuries that result from tripping over the chair's extended legs.

Old high chairs can be unsafe for a number of reasons. One is that if the chair was made before 1976, it probably doesn't conform to the current high chair safety standards. Many of these older chairs are top-heavy and tip over easily. Some lack adequate straps to hold a baby in securely. Some of the hinged trays on them can come crashing down on the small head when hit by an active baby.

If a high chair does meet the safety standards [which are voluntary], it will have a label saying it complies with the F404 Safety Standards for High Chairs as certified by the American Society for Testing and Materials. Chairs meeting safety standards will incorporate these safety features:

There is a locking device to prevent a folding chair from accidentally collapsing when it is in the sitting position.

## BABY GIFTS & GIFT BASKETS

According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission, more infants die every year in accidents involving cribs than with any other baby furniture product. Thousands of infants are injured seriously enough to require treatment in hospital emergency rooms.

[Baby Gifts and Gift Baskets](#) provides timely and practical information for new moms, as well as gift ideas for pregnancy, baby showers, and to celebrate birth:

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The joints of the chair have no scissoring action that could cause injury when the chair is being collapsed.

It has sturdy restraining straps. The chair is stable and will not topple if a child climbs up by the footrest.

It can support up to 100 pounds on the seat and fifty pounds on the footrest.

Assembly and usage instructions are easy to understand and follow.

The following warning is provided: " Warning: The child should be secured in the high chair at all times by the restraining system. The tray is not designed to hold the child in the chair. It is recommended that the chair is only used by children capable

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of sitting upward unassisted."

Safety standards aren't enough. You're going to have to examine the chair to see if it seems durable, easy to use, easy to clean, and comfortable.

Look at the frame. The legs should be widely separated. You should jiggle the tray

and tip the chair over from the rear and front to check for stability and collapsibility.[you'll find that folding models, which are easier to store will not be as sturdy] the front, or the rear legs, or both, should have a stabilizing crossbar. The chrome finish should have an even, glossy look and feel.

Pinch the seat padding between your thumb and index finger. If you can pull the vinyl up off the padding, chances are its too thin and will eventually tear with use. The foam padding should be firm. Make sure heat-sealed edges on the upholstery aren't scratchy. Avoid chairs that have decorative welting, trap food particles and make cleaning difficult. [It won't take you long to realize that food gets caught everywhere it can.].

Look for trays that have spill resistant rims rather than trays without rims or trays with chromed railings and decorative plastic beads. A large wrap-around tray that gives support to the child's elbow is best. Remove the tray and put it back on several times to see if it's easy to use. Test its fastening strength by first locking the tray and then trying to remove it from a number of positions while it's locked. If the tray latches with wide coils, they should be covered, so small fingers can't possibly get caught in them. Avoid chairs with trays that require you to bend over in order to place the tray correctly on its railing. Check the underside of the tray for sharp edges, pinching latches, or vinyl parts that may tear where they are bolted to the tray. Look for small pieces that could break off the tray if it should fall. And choose a tray that is dishwasher safe, immiscible, and is resistant to scratches. A vinyl tray creates a quieter surface for a beginning drummer than does a metal one.

The chair should have both waist and crotch belts-preferably a pair in which the waist belt threads through the crotch belt. These prevent dangerous falls and

entrapment of a baby between the seat base and the tray, which can be fatal. Try the belting system. It should fit over the baby's abdomen, not her legs; it should be easy to thread; and the belt latch should hold securely when you push it up or down or pull it outward, as a baby will.

You can also purchase a fabric "safe chair" in a well stocked baby shop. It can be used in high chairs in restaurants, where there are often no straps, or it can be used to convert an ordinary chair into a high chair.

The high chair's footrest should be adjustable so that it can be used comfortably by a six month old as well as a two year old. Wire footrests are more durable than flexible vinyl ones, which tend to tear when weight is put on them. Check the finishing on the wire edges and avoid those with sharp undersides. The footrest should be removable, or should flip out of the way under the chair to accommodate an older child; however, it should not be so easy to remove that it can't be trusted to hold the weight and movement of a climbing tot.

A few other things to consider: if there are caps protecting sharp edges or points, make sure they're difficult to remove. Evaluate the chair without the tray, too, since you'll probably want to use it at the dinner table before your toddler graduates to a regular chair.

Although wooden chairs are superior in stability and durability, they are plagued with problems. They tend to be difficult to clean, and there are frequently problems with the latches breaking. The seat measurements on wooden chairs tend to make them uncomfortable for one and two year olds and they often have nonadjustable footrests that are far too low on the chair to service babies. They seldom have adequate crotch belts and tend to rely on snap-on leather straps to connect the tray and seat. Wooden chairs with padded seats tend to have staples that fasten vinyl skirts to the seat. Unless you're willing to add extra padding for comfort and a harness or other restraining device, we don't recommend wooden high chairs.

You may want to use a feeding table instead of a high chair. They are close to the ground, so there's less distance to fall and since the child is propped in the middle of the square table, there is less chance of his falling in the first place. One disadvantage is that you can't pull it up to the table when you want the baby to join the rest of the family for dinner. In addition, feeding tables are much larger than high chairs, and they can be awkward to have in small kitchens, even when they can be stored under the kitchen table when not in use. Bending over to feed a baby at a feeding table can be hard on the back, and getting one in and out of one is more difficult than with a high chair.

## **Playpens**

Playpens, now euphemistically referred to as "play yards", were once an essential part of standard baby equipment, but research shows that they can actually inhibit a baby's mental development because they don't provide for continuous and varied stimulation. Playpens block the inborn drive to touch, to move, and to see. In fact, the "good" babies who sit quietly in the playpen for hours are the very ones who need more human contact and stimulation than the babies who object to confinement in the playpen.

That's not to say a playpen has no use. It's a good place to put your baby when momentary restraint is needed for a phone call, meal preparation, or perhaps housework. But it should be used sparingly. The ideal arrangement is a carefully childproofed house where a younger baby can be allowed to exercise on a blanket on the floor, and an older baby to roam under watchful eyes. It is important for babies to practice pulling up, crawling in an unrestrained environment. You can talk to your baby as you work around the house and give him physical freedom. This will provide an excellent learning environment for him.

Many families find that the playpen soon becomes a bulky, possibly unsafe toy depository that takes up space in the living room or nursery indeed. There are over three thousand playpen injuries every year that are serious enough to require emergency room treatment.

Safety standards on playpens are voluntary, so manufacturers aren't required to meet them, those that do tag their products to notify buyers.

There are two basic types of playpens: those constructed of wood and those made with metal tubing and nylon mesh. Wooden playpens are usually heavier than mesh-sided playpens. They fold down when their two hinged sides sandwich inward as the two floor panels lift up from the center. Mesh playpens call for a variety of folding maneuvers, in some cases even requiring that the playpen be turned completely upside down.

Mesh-sided playpens come in a variety of sizes and shapes, from rectangular crib-size models to larger square and multipaneled designs. The supportive tubing of the playpen is usually constructed of chrome, chrome-plated metal, or aluminum. Some models have straight legs with caps to protect the floor, while others have a bent-tube design; some of the latter may have uncovered metal u-joints that cause floor abrasion and rust stains.

Most soft-sided playpens use vinyl with heat-welded seams for border and at the base of the mesh [providing draft protection] and at the top of the playpen to cover the hinge assembly and the bars. More expensive models have thick foam padding between the vinyl and the bars to prevent injuries to babies should they fall.

If you decide to buy a playpen, keep the following points in mind:

### **Railings**

Railings should be able to support fifty pounds without breaking or bending.

There should be a locking device to prevent the playpen from collapsing accidentally.

Side railings should be at least twenty inches tall to prevent a baby from climbing out.

The playpen should come with a locking device to prevent it from accidentally folding up or the sides being lowered by the baby.

Unlocking the sides should require a dual action.

There should be no scissoring, cutting, or pinching potential at the hinges.

## Baby Deluxe Book Gift Basket



A great gift for the whole new family! We've included some great books for the new baby and parents alike! For mom and dad, we've selected an indispensable baby medical reference book, called "Johnson's Your Baby's First Year." It is a comprehensive guide covering health issues and important milestones during the first 12 months of life. We also include board books for baby to play with - "Peek a Boo Bard" (interactive Baby Einstein book with sound), "Playtime Peek A Boo" (lift the flap book), "Baby Says Peek A Boo" (mirror surprise book), "Bathtime Peek A Boo" (touch and feel book), "Bedtime Peek A Boo", "Things That Go" (Baby Einstein), "Babies" (Baby Einstein) board book and "Baby Noah World Animals" (Baby Einstein). The lined wicker hamper also holds a plush animal.

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to slip out of place.

### Edges

There should be no sharp edges, protrusions, or points that could hurt a baby.

### On Wooden Playpens

Slats should be spaced no more than 2 3/8 inches apart [like crib slats].

Wooden surfaces should be finished well and splinter free.

### Vinyl

Older models and second hand vinyl-covered playpens often have vinyl on the top rail that, if torn, the baby could bite off and choke on.

Make sure the vinyl upholstery is thick, is not torn, and has no holes. There are hundreds of incidents every year of babies biting off sections of vinyl and ingesting or aspirating them. Pinch the vinyl between your fingers. Thick vinyl is difficult to crease and will feel heavy when separated from the padding; thin vinyl will crease easily and is less durable.

Make sure vinyl seams are heat-welted or stitched. Look for seams that are smooth to the touch. Heat-welted seams should appear even to ensure there's no problem with splitting. Machine stitched seams should leave no dangling threads, gaps or holes where the stitching has missed the vinyl.

### Floors

Floors should be strong enough to hold eighty pounds of static weight.

Floors should be able to withstand fifty pounds of bouncing weight without giving way.

Be sure there are no metal staples or hardware in the floor that could be pulled loose and swallowed.

See that there are no sharp bolt heads that your bay could fall on if the padding were

Wooden playpens provide babies with a better view, back support, and bars that can help them pull up into a standing position.

As with cribs, there is the potential that babies can hit their head on bars.

Wooden playpens are heavy and awkward to move, but much safer than mesh ones.

There should be teething rails on all four sides, and they should adhere securely so little fingers cannot get under them.

### **On Mesh Playpens**

Be sure the mesh is tightly woven so clothing can't catch in it, which could result in strangulation.

When the mesh is woven tightly enough to be safe, the baby's view is limited, and the world outside the pen will be a blur.

There is a potentially fatal suffocation pocket between the mesh and the mattress when the drop-side is down. Also with the drop-side down, children have cut or pinched their fingers in the locking mechanism.