



Choosing a Safe Bed for Your Baby

Though it's not necessary, you may want to get your baby a bassinet or a cradle for her first bed. As she grows, she'll eventually need a crib. Here are some tips to help you choose the safest bed for your baby.

Bassinets and Cradles

Bassinets and cradles are smaller and more portable than cribs and can easily be moved from room to room. Many new parents keep the bassinet in their rooms to make the first few weeks a little easier. Check a few things before you put your baby into a cradle or bassinet:

- The bottom should be well-supported so it can't possibly collapse.
- The bassinet or cradle should have a wide base so it can't tip over, even if someone bumps against it.
- If it has folding legs, they should be locked straight whenever the bed is being used.
- Your baby should graduate from the bassinet or cradle to her crib around the end of the first month or by the time she weighs 10 pounds.



Cribs

- When you're in the store, give the crib a good shake. If it wobbles or rattles, move on or check out the same model at another store.
- The inside of the crib should allow a standard-sized mattress (51¼ inches long by 27¼ inches wide) to fit snugly. If you can fit two fingers between the mattress and the crib, the mattress is too small for the crib.
- If the crib allows for adjusting the height of the mattress, make sure that when the mattress is in place, it won't fall.
- Make sure the crib is labeled to meet federal safety guidelines.
- Cribs made before 1973 are more likely to have safety problems than newer models. But even models made as recently as 1991 can be unsafe.
- Check for slat size and sharp edges.
- Although fancy decorative touches are nice, they could pose choking hazards or trap little fingers, arms or legs.
- Avoid cribs or beds with decorative knobs; they can snag baby's clothing.
- There should be no cutouts in the headboard or footboard; a baby's head could get trapped in them.

Cribs built after 1974 are required to meet strict safety standards:

- The distance between the crib slats must be no more than 2⅜ inches wide.
- The drop sides must be at least 9 inches above the mattress support when they're lowered.
- When the drop sides are raised, they must be at least 26 inches above the support at its lowest position.
- A new crib should carry an ASTM/JPMA seal. This means that in addition to meeting federal guidelines, it complies with the American Society for Testing and Materials/Juvenile Products Manufacturers safety standards.