



Q&A: CPSC's new crib standards: what does it mean for you?

On December 15, 2010, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) adopted new rules that set strong mandatory standards for cribs and portable cribs. These new standards are now the strongest in the world and will provide assurance to parents that when they buy a new crib; it will keep their child safe. This Q&A attempts to answer questions parents and caregivers may have regarding these ground-breaking rules.

Q. *Why do we need a new crib standard?*

A. Following recent years of recalls of millions of cribs due to entrapment deaths and injuries, the new standards will ensure that new cribs have been tested for safety to rigorous standards. Many babies were killed or injured in unsafe cribs.

Q. *What do the new standards cover?*

A. The new rules put many new tests and requirements in place:

- Cribs with full side drop-sides will not be allowed -- the bottom 20" of the crib rail must be fixed to eliminate the entrapment hazards seen when the hardware fails.
- All cribs must undergo rigorous testing for slat strength, durability and mattress support strength. The series of testing is conducted on one crib to simulate a life-time of use. This is the key to the new standard. Most of the 10 million cribs recalled since 2007 were able to meet the weak industry standards that were in place.
- Warnings and labeling have been improved, both to make parents more aware of when a crib is mis-assembled and to alert them to developmental signs to stop using a crib (when the child attempts to climb out). While most attention has been rightly focused on entrapment deaths in cribs, most injuries are as a result of children falling out of cribs.

Q. *What types of cribs do these standards and rules cover?*

A. The new standards include two sets of similar rules: one for full-size cribs and one for non-full-size cribs. Non-full-size cribs can be smaller, larger or a different shape than a full-size crib, which is a standardized shape and size. The rules do not cover mesh sided play yards or portable cribs, only those with rigid sides such as wood or metal cribs. CPSC will be developing a standard for play yards, but it won't apply to child care as these do.

Q. *What is the timing of all these requirements?*

A. The new crib standards will be effective in six months. At this time, new and used cribs for sale will have to meet the standards. Then, child care providers and hotels and other public accommodations will have an additional 18 months to replace their non-compliant cribs. By January 2013, all child care facilities should have compliant and safe cribs. Many providers will be able to comply sooner.

Q. *I have a drop-side crib at home. Will it be illegal now to use it?*

A. No, the new rules have no impact on use of your own cribs at home. However, it will be illegal to sell older model cribs after the effective date in six months. Here is some information on what to do if you are using a drop-side or other older model crib at home:

First, check the [list](#) at CPSC.gov and ***make sure your crib hasn't been recalled – millions have***. Check the list carefully –cribs might be known by a name other than their brand name, or made by one company and sold under another name. If it doubt, get the model name and number and manufacturer and call CPSC to confirm. If it has been recalled, follow the recall instructions to get a repair kit, replace the crib or receive a refund.

If your crib is not recalled, check all the hardware and plastic parts to make sure it is all tight and there are no broken, cracked or missing pieces. The crib should feel sturdy when you shake it and you should not be able to lower the drop-side by any means other than the manufacturer's instructed method. ***If your crib shows any breakage or you can move the drop-side without following the correct method, STOP using the crib.*** Call the company for replacement parts and do not use the crib until new parts are correctly installed. If the crib doesn't have replacement parts, stop using it and call both the company and [CPSC](#) to report the breakage. ***Never attempt to fix the crib yourself*** without the correct hardware and instructions from the manufacturer.

If your crib has no broken, cracked or missing parts and feels sturdy, continue to use it until the child can transition to a bed, but stop using the drop-side mechanism and check frequently – at least once a week -- for loose, broken, cracked or missing hardware or parts. However, ***do not use the crib for a subsequent child or hand it down since assembly and disassembly of a drop-side crib can increase the risk of failure.*** It may be worth the peace of mind to purchase a new crib.

Q. *I'm short (or have a bad back) and think a fixed side crib will make it too difficult for me to care for my baby. What are my options?*

A. Many new cribs are lower to the ground and easier to reach into to pick up or lay down your baby. Another option is a drop-gate cribs in which just the top section of the side rail folds down, allowing easier access. And if you feel you do need a stool for access, consider using a wide stable step such as those for step aerobics classes.

Q. *My crib has been recalled or I just don't feel safe using it anymore. What is a safe sleeping arrangement for my baby until I get a new crib?*

A. First, if your baby is still under 5 months and not yet rolling over or pushing up on her hands and knees, you can use a safe bassinet. For older babies, a safe (not recalled) portable mesh crib or 'pack and play' is a good alternative. And finally, toddlers can be safely moved to a mattress on the floor or a toddler bed. In fact, many injuries in cribs happen when toddlers attempt to crawl out, so it might be time to make the move anyway. Unsafe sleep arrangements include couches, chairs, soft bedding or with siblings or others in an adult bed.

Need more information on cribs or other child product safety issues? Visit www.KidsInDanger.org, email KID at email@KidsInDanger.org, or call 312.595.0649