

Myths and Facts

of Children's Product Safety

Parents and caregivers want to do everything possible to keep their children safe. Yet, many people have misconceptions about children's product safety – assuming that someone is responsible for making sure that the products they use for their children are safe. These myths – and the facts – may be an eye-opener for you.

Myth: *While children face dangers from many things, very few are injured by children's products such as strollers, highchairs and cribs.*

Fact: An average of 65 children are killed each year in incidents associated with children's products and another 69,100 are rushed to emergency rooms with children's product-related injuries. Children can be hurt in so many ways. We should not have to worry that the very products we buy to care for them and keep them safe may end up causing an injury or death.

Myth: *These product-related injuries and deaths are isolated incidents that occur randomly.*

Fact: Injuries and deaths in juvenile products are a part of the flawed children's product safety system in the United States. After learning that their son was strangled by a portable crib in his Chicago childcare home, the parents of 16-month-old Danny Keysar thought that his death was a freak accident. Later they learned that Danny was the crib's 5th victim. A total of 15 children have died in cribs of similar faulty design. And there are myriad other children's products that may cause injuries or death.

Myth: *Like everything else, the US government has many safety regulations and requirements covering children's products and manufacturers are required to test products before they sell them.*

Fact: Simply not the case, as astonishing as that may seem. There are a few products that have mandatory safety standards: cribs, bunk beds, pacifiers and toys with small parts. In addition, the government regulates toxic materials and flammability of some types of items. Other than those, there are no mandatory safety standards for children's products and no required system of testing children's products for safety before they are sold. So the stroller, playyard, highchair or carrier you buy may have been made to voluntary standards and may have passed independent testing, or maybe not.

Myth: *As long as I buy new things for my baby and buy well known brand names, I can be sure they are safe. Only hand-me-downs, older products and cheap imports cause injuries.*



A nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children's product safety

Fact: Because of the lack of mandatory standards and testing, there is no guarantee that a new product is safe. In fact, when a product is recalled, it is usually for a design or manufacturing flaw that has been in the product from the first day. Injuries and deaths are often reported when a product has been handed down, for the simple reason that so many baby products are used by more than one child. Injuries and deaths also take place in new products. No manufacturer is immune from recalls and faulty products.

Myth: *Children's products are safe generally, with just a few occasional recalls.*

Fact: Products intended for use by children or in their care are recalled, on average, twice per week. Unless you actively seek out recall information, it is not likely that you are informed about most defective products that are recalled.

Myth: *If I buy a product that turns out to have a flaw, the manufacturer will make every effort to notify me through the mail if I sent in my registration card or by other means such as advertisements.*

Fact: Manufacturers are required to issue a joint press release with the CPSC and alert retailers to the recall. Beyond that, it is all negotiable. There is no requirement that just because you sent in a registration card the manufacturer will alert you to the recall. Paid advertising about recalls is extremely rare.

Now that you have a basic understanding of the children's product safety system and its current pitfalls, take these steps to protect your children and make the system work better for all of us.

- Learn more about the problem of children's product safety. Visit www.KidsInDanger.org or call 312/595-0649 for more information.
- Do a product inventory of items you use with children and check for recalled products at www.cpsc.gov or call 1-800-638-2772. At the same time, sign up to get notices of all new recalls from the CPSC. Check car seats at www.nhtsa.gov or 1-800-424-9393.

Educate others and encourage policymakers to address problems with children product safety. Tell your friends, family or coworkers about children's product safety. Write to your national elected representatives and tell them to make children's safety a priority by requiring product safety testing and stricter standards. Local and state officials can increase awareness of recalled products among retailers, the hospitality industry, childcare providers, foster parents and others. Learn about initiatives at http://www.kidsindanger.org/protect_advocacy.htm.