

Consumer Product Safety Alert

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207

CPSC Warns Parents About Infant Strangulations Caused by Failure of Crib Hardware

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is concerned about possible accidental death or injury to young children in cribs that are in need of repair. The CPSC has investigated or received reports of numerous incidents in which cribs have come apart. Many of these resulted in death.

For example, a 5-month-old infant died when he became lodged between the mattress and the side rail of his crib. A support hanger on the mattress frame had come off the hook attached to the crib end panel or corner post creating a space in which the infant's head became entrapped. In another accident, a 6-month-old baby became entrapped and choked to death when screws securing the side rail pulled loose from the corner post of the crib creating a space between the rail and the mattress.

In yet another accident, a missing bolt caused a side rail to separate from the mattress and a 6-month-old baby became entrapped in a space between the mattress and side rail and suffocated. Similar reports of fatal accidents are repeated many times in Commission files and many more non-fatal incidents are on record in which an entrapped child was rescued.

Accidents such as these may occur when hardware intended to hold parts of the crib together has worked loose, come apart, or broken. Hardware can become worn or over-stressed as a result of children's playing; repeated disassembling and reassembling of cribs, such as during household moves; when new babies are born in the family; and when cribs are sold or given to another family. Hardware also can work loose as a result of moving or cleaning the crib.

On some cribs, the design is such that the mattress support hanger may easily come out of the supporting hook, allowing the mattress to drop at one corner. This can happen when changing the sheets, raising or lowering the drop side, or simply when the baby moves in the crib. The CPSC also knows of cases in which wood screws have pulled out of the wood, machine screws and nuts have worked loose, and hooks which support the mattress have broken or bent.

A project has been initiated to work with crib manufacturers to examine the need for product standards for crib hardware and to determine the extent to which such standards would prevent injuries and deaths. If you have a crib, you are urged to inspect it frequently for hardware which has disengaged or needs to be repaired or replaced. The Commission also suggests:

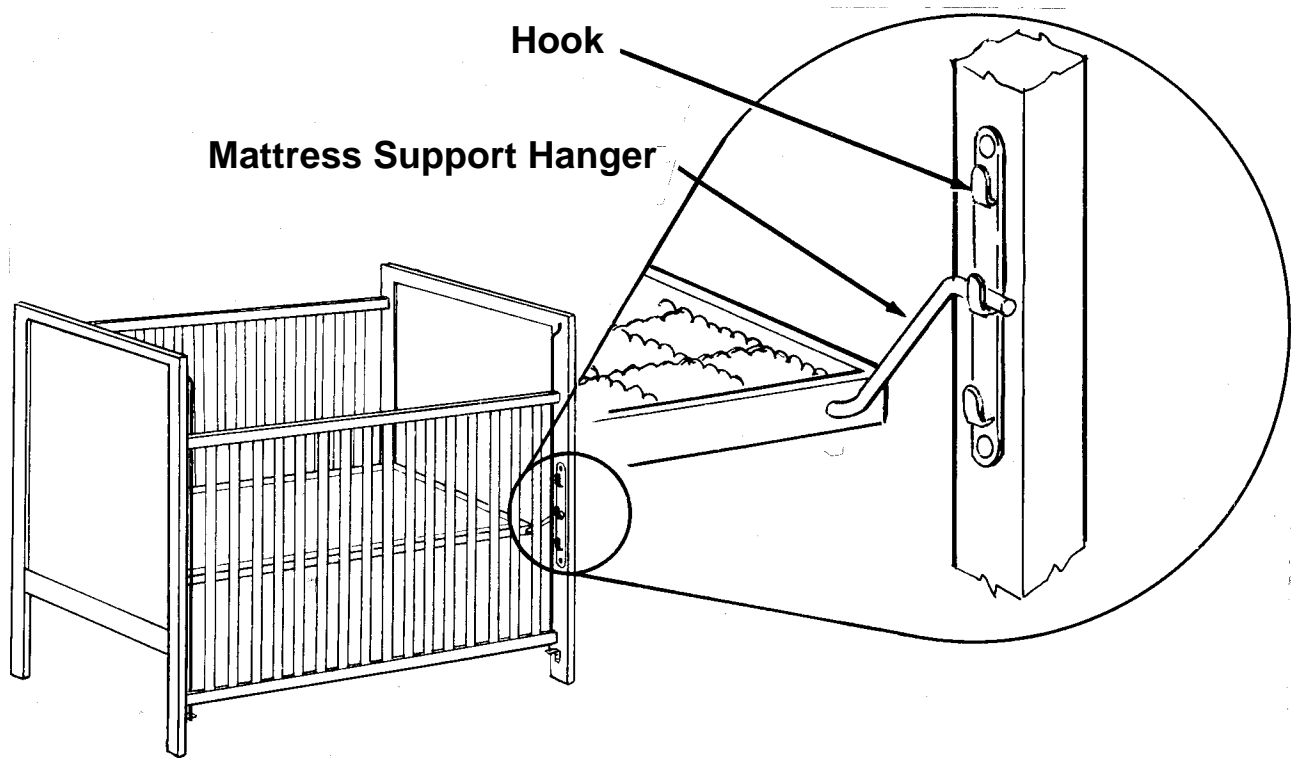
- When buying a new crib, physically examine it for stability. Look for adequate strength in the frame and headboard, a secure fitting mattress support structure, and a label certifying that the crib complies with the Commission's standards for cribs.
- If you buy a used crib, make sure all the hardware is present and in good condition. Make sure that when the crib is assembled, all the pieces of the crib are securely attached and the mattress fits snugly. Also, check the wood joints to be sure they are not coming apart. Check to see that the slats are no more than 2-3/8" apart—the distance required by law for all new cribs.
- Make sure that all screws and bolts fit tightly and do not turn freely in the wood. If a screw cannot be securely tightened, replace it with a larger one that can.
- On cribs in which the mattress support hanger easily disengages from the hooks on corner posts, secure the mattress support hanger firmly to the hook on the post.
- If you have doubts about the condition of your crib, have the crib repaired or discard it.

The CPSC has a toll-free hotline which it encourages consumers to use to report product safety problems or to request information about product safety. The number is 800-638-CPSC. A teletypewriter number for the hearing impaired is 800-638-8270.

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1. Tighten all nuts, bolts, and screws periodically.
2. Whenever crib is moved, be sure all mattress support hangers are secure.
3. Check hooks regularly to be sure none are broken or bent.