

## Buying Guide

### COTS



**Babies probably spend more time in cots than anywhere else, so it's important their cots are safe.**

Cot-related injuries account for 20% of all children's injuries involving nursery furniture. Nearly half of cot-related injuries involve children falling while trying to climb out of the cot. Smaller numbers involve the failure of the cot, e.g. the side falls down, the base falls out, or the screws come loose. Fingers get caught in holes or opening between 5-12mm; limbs in gaps between 30-50mm and heads in gaps over 85mm. A small number of deaths from strangulation occur each year when the head and upper body are caught in gaps, sometimes found in older cots or cots which have been modified.

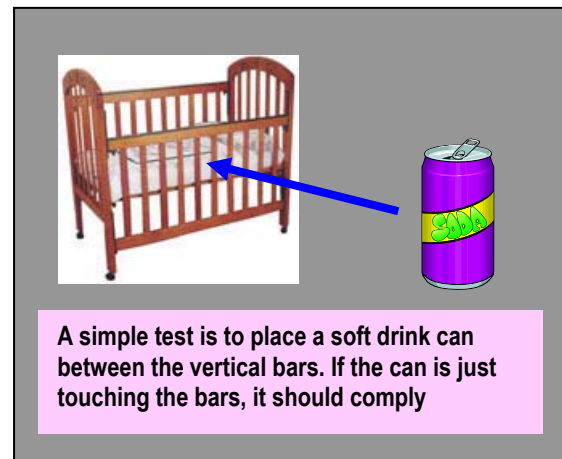
Household cots must legally comply with the safety requirements of Australian Standard AS 2172

Cots must be safely designed and constructed and not have climb-out or fall-out hazards, strangulation hazards, head, arm or leg entrapment hazards, or cause injuries to fingers and toes. These requirements do not permit gaps where a child could become trapped or protrusions that could cause a child's clothing to snag.

- Make sure the cot has an Australian Standards sticker stating that it complies with the mandatory product safety standard.



- Ensure that the basic design has **safe** gaps not less than 50mm and not more than 85mm.



- Always make sure the mattress fits snugly to within 25mm at the sides and the ends - a gap no more than your index finger.
- Ensure a minimum height of 500mm from the top of the mattress to the top of the cot's sides.
- Check the dropside mechanisms are secure and easy for an adult to use, but not a child.
- Select fixed based cots with the lowest possible base.
- Make sure there are no horizontal bars or decorations which could be used to climb out of the cot.
- Check there is no protrusions which clothing can be caught on.

child safety is no accident

- Always follow the manufacturer's assembly instructions and keep them somewhere safe to refer to.

### 'Real Life' Cases

1. Four month old caught head between bars of cot and the mattress. Suffocated
2. Twelve-month-old in cot became entangled in nearby curtain drawstring; strangled.

## Safe Practices

Here are some simple guidelines to make part of your daily routine to ensure your child's safety:

- To avoid strangulation, cots and beds must be placed well away from exposed blind and curtain cords. Suppliers of new window coverings are required to ensure that all cords do not contain hazardous loops. Existing cords should be kept out of the child's reach. This can be done by securing to a cleat, hook, or other safety device.
  - Position the cot away from windows, heaters and power points to reduce risk of injury from falls, burns and electrocution.
  - Give your cot regular safety checks for wear and tear. Repair any hazards immediately or do not use the cot until the potential hazard is fixed. Peeling paint could cause choking.
  - Remove any items that your child could use as a climbing aid, including large toys, cot bumpers and cushions. These can also cause suffocation.
  - Refrain from placing small items into your child's cot or in reach of your child, as these could cause choking.
- Items such as pictures and mirrors can fall and should not be hung over cots. Refrain from using toys or mobiles with stretch elastic cords.
  - Ensure any adjustable base on the cot is moved to the lowest setting as soon as the child can sit unaided.
  - Do not use V or U shaped pillows for children under 2 years of age. Children can become wedged in a pillow and suffocate. It is safer **not** to use a pillow for children under 2 years.
  - Never use electric blankets or hot water bottles for babies or young children.
  - When children start to climb, it is a sure sign they have outgrown their cots. When this happens, move your child to a single bed.



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