

Safety Fact Sheet

Portable Cots



What is a Portable Cot?

Portable cots are baby beds designed for short term use when a cot is not available. They are not designed, nor suitable for use on a permanent basis. Portable cots consist of four high sides made of fabric or mesh, a collapsible frame and a folding mattress, allowing them to be transported easily.

Some portable cots come with a bassinette insert for use within the portable cot. Bassinette inserts are held in place at a half way point along the portable cot frame.

Three-in-one portable cots may also be purchased, serving the three purposes of portable cot, bassinette and change table, for use when travelling or visiting friends.

How may a child be injured?

Entrapment

- Portable cots may collapse on a baby's head or limb, trapping them within or under the portable cot frame.
- Babies may get their fingers caught in gaps along the frame of the portable cot .

Falls

- Babies may fall out of the cot if they are able to climb over one of the cot sides. This may be possible if objects such as soft toys and pillows are present in the cot allowing babies to climb up on.

Suffocation

- Babies may become trapped between the mattress and cot frame if the mattress is not designed for the portable cot and does not fit snugly inside the frame.
- Babies may suffocate if items such as toys, head bumpers or pillows are placed in the cot.
- Babies may suffocate under bed linen, if the bed is made up incorrectly. Loose bedclothes may be pulled up over a baby's face.

How common are these injuries?

While it is known that fatalities have occurred as a result of portable cots collapsing on children, there are no recent published statistics available.

Is there a Law or an Australian Standard for portable cots?

It is recommended that manufacturers of portable cots follow the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 2195:1999). This is a voluntary standard that manufacturers are not required to meet, however The Children's Hospital at Westmead and Kaleidoscope suggest that you purchase a portable cot that meets this standard. If you choose to purchase a portable cot that does not meet the Australian Standard, please keep in mind the safety reminders below.

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Remember:

The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommends that you purchase a portable cot that meets the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 2195:1999).

- Ensure that the portable cot is in good condition and has no sharp edges, protruding parts or gaps (see Cot Safety Fact Sheet for recommended gap widths and heights for protruding parts).
- Check that the top rail locking mechanisms work and that they do not collapse under pressure.
- Check that the fabric/mesh covering the sides of the cot is free from snags and tears.
- Ensure that the base of the cot does not sag when weight or pressure is applied on it.
- Do not place your cot beneath a hanging picture or mirror that may fall on your baby.
- Place the cot away from windows that have cord or blind strings close by. These strings may pose a strangulation hazard if your baby can access them from the cot.
- Place the cot away from heaters, lights, power points and electrical appliances to ensure that your baby does not get burned.
- Ensure that the mattress used in the bed is one that comes with the cot or one that fits snugly within the bed frame and that there are no gaps measuring more than 2.5cm between the mattress and the frame.
- Make sure that the cot sheets fit snugly around the mattress and that the sheets are folded under the mattress so that they may not be dislodged when pulled on one side.
- If using a portable cot in a household with older siblings ensure that the children are not able to release the rail locking mechanisms and understand that they should not apply pressure to the portable cot sides.
- When using portable cots with bassinette inserts, check to ensure that the bassinette insert is securely in place and that it meets the safety recommendations listed in the Bassinette and Cradle Safety Fact Sheet.
- If using the change table insert of the portable cot, ensure that it meets safety recommendations listed in the Change Table Safety Fact Sheet.
- Do not use a portable cot if your child weighs more than the recommended weight advised by your cot manufacturer.
- Remove from the cot all pillows, bumpers, comforters and sheepskins before putting your baby to sleep.
- Place your baby on his or her back to sleep and make up the cot so that his or her feet are at the end of the cot (For more information visit www.sidsandkids.org).