

## INFANT SAFETY AND EQUIPMENT STUDY GUIDE

In order to protect citizens from faulty and unsafe merchandise, the United States has formed the Consumer Product Safety Commission or the CPSC. This commission is mandated by Congress to monitor the market for hazardous products and to enforce government-set safety standards. Playpens, strollers, carriages, high chairs, carrier seats, and changing tables are subject to federal regulation only of small parts, sharp points, and sharp edges. The CPSC works with consumers and manufacturers to gather product safety data, conduct tests, and initiate needed changes in product design.

In addition, there is the Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association (JPMA). This is an industry trade association that maintains a Product Safety Certification Program for certain products. Manufacturers seeking JPMA certification (a seal on the product itself or on the packaging, instructions, or purchase display case) must submit their product for testing in compliance with safety standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials. Tests are repeated four times a year, with products and results given to an independent lab for retesting and inspection.

The CPSC continually evaluates products. If it finds a potential hazard or danger, it requires the manufacturer to correct it or recall it. If a recall is made, the information is sent to the media, health departments, and stores carrying children's equipment. Most children's and parent's magazines have a section listing any recalls. Show the students a section from one of these magazines or newspapers.

If the registration card has been correctly completed and sent to the manufacturer, the manufacturer will send you notification of a recall. Show the students a copy of an information/registration card that they may find when purchasing a piece of equipment. Discuss how important it is to complete this card and send it back to the manufacturer.

Even though these organizations are formed and operated for our safety, we, as consumers, must also do our part in maintaining a safe environment for young children. Some general safety tips include:

1. To ensure that a piece of equipment is safe, consider the manufacturer's recommendations concerning age, size, and weight. The equipment was made with a child's safety in mind.
2. If you have second thoughts about whether a repaired piece of baby equipment is as durable as new equipment, discard the item.
3. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for use and assembly of baby equipment. If no instructions are present, contact the manufacturer for a copy.
4. Be sure to pay attention to the manufacturer's warning label. Keep all labels in a place where you can refer to them as needed.
5. Never leave a child alone with any product, other than the crib.
6. Never leave a child in a mesh playpen with the drop side down.
7. Always use a car seat, never a carrier seat in a seat belt.

As you think about bringing a baby home from the hospital, what is the first piece of equipment you think you will need? (Let the class brainstorm pieces of equipment they think are necessary.) A general survey of parents and caregivers revealed the following list of essential or necessary equipment:

1. Approved car seat
2. Car seat cover and head rest
3. Crib
4. Stair gate
5. Bottles
6. Stroller
7. High chair
8. Diaper bag
9. Chest of drawers

There are many additional pieces of equipment that are nice to have:

1. Baby pack
2. Bassinet
3. Pacifier
4. Playpen
5. Infant seat
6. Lamp/night light
7. Mobiles and decorations

The following items are considered luxury items to most parents:

1. Baby bathtub
2. Jump seat
3. Changing table
4. Infant swing
5. Crib Cuddle/Hammock
6. Breast pump

You may be wondering where baby powder, baby lotion, ointments, creams, etc., should be listed. Many doctors today say that these items are not helpful to the baby. For example, baby powder tends to get into the baby's lungs and causes problems, and baby lotion clogs the pores and irritates the skin. These are items you probably won't want to use, unless a doctor recommends them.

Many safety standards have been identified for specific pieces of equipment. The most common ones are listed on the next page.

**CRIBS**

**CAUTION:** If you plan to use a crib made before 1974, when safety standards were set, inspect it carefully to ensure it meets the current safety standards.

1. Slats should be spaced no more than 2 3/8" apart.
2. Slats should be in good repair.
3. Corner posts should be no higher than 1/16".
4. There should be no cutouts in the foot board or headboard that would allow the baby's head to become trapped.
5. Mattress should fit snugly with a space of less than two fingers' width between the mattress and crib sides.
6. The sides should be securely held in raised position by drop-side latches that your baby cannot release.
7. All screws and bolts should be in place and tight.

**STROLLERS**

1. To prevent tipping, the base should be wide and sturdy.
2. Make sure coil springs or X-joints are not exposed.
3. Brakes should securely lock the wheels.
4. If there is a shopping basket, it should be located on the base or over or directly in front of the rear wheels.
5. To prevent accidental folding or collapsing, a latching device must be latched.
6. Make sure you have an easy-to-fasten seat-belt buckle that cannot be opened by your baby.

**CARRIERS**

1. For stability, your carrier should have a wide and sturdy base.
2. To prevent sliding, look for nonskid feet.
3. An easy-to-fasten buckle that your baby cannot open should be present on the crotch and waist straps. All straps should be securely attached.
4. Supporting devices should lock securely.
5. There should be no cracks, tears, or holes in the base or cushion.

**PLAYPENS**

1. In older playpens only, wooden slats should be spaced no more than 2 3/8" apart and in good repair.
2. Mesh sides should have openings of 1/4" and be woven; no loose threads or tears.
3. Mesh should be attached securely to the floor of the playpen and the top rail.
4. There should be no tears, holes, or cracks in the rail at the top.
5. The drop-side model has a warning label against leaving the playpen in a side-down position.
6. All bolts, staples, and screws should not be visible but should be secure.

### HIGH CHAIRS

1. Strong waist and crotch straps attached securely to the seat instead of the tray.
2. The fastener should be easy to buckle but not easy enough to be opened by your baby.
3. Tray should be free of cracks.
4. Tray should lock securely.
5. Sturdy and wide base for stability.
6. There must be a locking device if the chair folds or collapses.
7. Caps or plugs need to have tubing firmly attached to them.

### SWINGS

1. Strong, stable base.
2. Long-running mechanism.
3. Music box is nice but not necessary.
4. Safety straps.

### CAR RESTRAINTS

**CAUTION:** In the last few years, many models and brands of car seats have been modified or recalled. For recall information, call the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which enforces and sets the carseat regulations, at 1-800-424-9393.

1. Must meet federal crash standards.
2. If the restraint has been in an accident, do not use it.
3. Make sure it is appropriate for your baby's weight and size.
4. Should be compatible with the car's seat belt route and fit in the car properly.
5. Restraint straps should be easy to use and securely attached.

### BABY WALKERS

The Canadian Medical Association has recently placed a ban on the sale of all walkers due to recent research. Since the 1980s, more babies have been injured in walkers than in any other type of baby equipment. The main causes of injury are toppling, accidental rolling down an un gated staircase, and getting fingers pinched or trapped in the assembly mechanism. Walkers cause infants to irregularly use their hip joint. They give a false sense of balance and locomotion. Walkers also cause what is known as "walker feet," which is when a child walks on their toes and leans forward more than normal as they walk. There is no evidence that children who use walkers learn to walk any faster than those who do not use them.