

SLEEPING/Cribs

OVERVIEW

For sleeping, the crib and mattress are the biggest investments you'll make, and aside from a fitted sheet, the only things you'll actually need for your baby, from newborn to toddler. Recent safety advice advocates no co-sleeping and sleeping in the same room as your baby for at least the first six months. Cribs can be made of solid wood, metal, or pressed/laminated wood. They can be finished with paints, varnishes, lacquers or, if made of metal, powder-coated. Cribs are durable and can be used by many children, so long as they are made to current safety standards and are free of harmful chemicals.

HIDDEN HAZARDS

Formaldehyde is used in the adhesive that binds pressed board (like MDF), particle board, and plywood together. It can also be used as glue or adhesive with solid-wood furniture. Older cribs sold before 2008 may have been painted with **lead**-based paint. Metal cribs can be "powder-coated" with a material made with **bisphenols**. Often, cribs come with plastic bite guards (as babies grow and stand, they can chew the top rail) and some are made of **polyvinyl chloride**(PVC).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Second-hand cribs may not meet current safety standards that were set to avoid trapping or seriously injuring babies. Cribs with the following features are no longer legal to sell new: drop-side fronts and widely-spaced slats (Current US maximum is 2 and 3/8" wide).

RECOMMENDATIONS

You can stretch an investment in a high-quality, **solid-wood crib** by choosing a model that can convert to a toddler/day bed. Depending on how fast your child grows, this can extend its life to 2-3 years. Make your choice last by opting for a solid-wood crib with **zero or low-VOC finish**, or consider unfinished solid wood. Ask about glues, even with solid wood.

If you choose a crib made with plywood, laminate, or MDF, ask about VOCs and formaldehyde - and seek those that are certified to **CARB (California Air Resources Board) Phase 2 limits**.

Shopping on a tight budget? Formaldehyde leaves products made with it early in the product's life. Recent second-hand cribs with fixed sides and narrow spacing of slats are worth considering.

If you do buy or are given a crib that smells strongly out of the packaging, consider setting it up as soon as possible in a well-ventilated area. This could be a garage, or in the new nursery room, with the door closed and the window open enough to allow fresh air to circulate and flush out the formaldehyde.

REFERENCES & RESOURCES

Learn more about the hidden hazards by reviewing the [glossary](#) or take a deep dive by reading [Safer Products for Babies and Toddlers: Resources and Recommendations for Retailers](#).

Learn more about the [California Air Resources Board's limits](#) on formaldehyde and other chemicals.