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New data on crib injuries

By Jennifer LaRue Huget

[Data published this morning](#) in the journal *Pediatrics* reveals the alarming frequency of injuries to babies who have been placed in cribs, playpens or bassinets.

A review of emergency-room treatments for more than 181,000 babies age 2 and under from 1990 to 2008 showed an average of 113 deaths per year from accidents associated with those three pieces of nursery equipment. That number, which is considered low because such deaths are typically under-reported -- is far higher than should be acceptable, the authors note. But they are not especially surprising, as such fatalities have been tracked before.

What hasn't been tallied until this study is the number of non-fatal, but often quite serious, injuries to babies who have been placed in cribs, playpens or bassinets. An average of 26 such injuries per day occurred during the time studied, with most (66 percent) involving falls, usually from cribs (83 percent) and most commonly affecting the head or neck (40 percent).

The study calls for creation and implementation of safety measures in the design and construction of cribs, playpens and bassinets. It also recommends that parents be told how to safely use such equipment and made aware of dangers they may pose.

Still, the authors note that parents and other caregivers use such equipment to keep babies out of harm's way when the caregiver isn't able to keep his or her most vigilant eye on the child. Caregivers, the study argues, can't reasonably be expected to anticipate and protect against all the kinds of harm a baby placed in a crib, playpen or bassinet might face.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission in December finally [voted to ban the manufacture and sale of drop-side cribs](#). That move alone should go a long way toward reducing the number of infant deaths and injuries: The study found that many falls from cribs occurred when side rails either were left down or slid down when a child leaned on them. Babies' high center of gravity, the study notes, makes them susceptible to tumbling head-first over such rails.

Parents, do you feel safe when you place your baby in a crib, playpen or bassinet? Do these new figures surprise you? And do you think manufacturers and federal regulators are doing enough to keep babies safe from such injuries?