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Bunk Bed Shopping – 10 Point Safety Checklist To Protect Your Children

By S.A. Smith

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Every year thousands of children are admitted to hospital emergency rooms due to incidents involving bunk beds involving improper use, manufacturing, or set up. If you follow our 10 point safety checklist, bunk beds can still be a great bedding solution for your children:

Reputable manufacturer

Look for manufacturers that are established, and have a long history of manufacturing bunk beds. A good manufacturer will also stand behind their product by providing a lifetime warranty.

ASTM and CPSC guidelines

Ask the retailer if it meets the voluntary safety guidelines of the American Standards of Testing and Materials and the minimum safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission. If it does, you'll know that the bed meets all current and reasonable safety standards.

Strong frame construction

Examine and test the durability and strength of the bunk bed frame. It should easily hold a parent's weight – climb on it and wiggle the frame a bit. A good bunk bed will remain firmly grounded without movement or noise.

Only rounded edges

Check the entire bed construction for smoothness of materials and fasteners. There should be no sharp edges or protruding points anywhere in the construction.

Measure the safety rails

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Safety rails should run on both sides of the top bunk, and the lower rail should be no higher than 3 1/2 inches above the top of the mattress height – any higher and your children could slip underneath it. Also make sure the top rail is at least 5 inches above the mattress top to prevent your child from rolling over the safety rails.

Ensure proper mattress fit

Strangulation deaths have occurred in the US when children fall through openings between the mattress and the frame during the night. Make sure the mattress opening snugly fits the mattress without a lot adjustment room. If the mattress has a gap greater than 3 inches from any side of the mattress to the bed frame, headboard or footboard – it does not fit properly.

Sturdy ladder construction

Make sure the ladder is well constructed and is firmly attached and bolted to the bed frame. Test it out with your own weight – if it moves around it is not safe.

Sturdy mattress support

A lot of injuries are caused by children in the lower bunks pushing up on the underside of the top bunk and dislodging the mattress or support frame. Ensure the top bunk has sturdy mattress supports that are secured to the bed frame with bolts or screws. You don't want a floating board support system, as these will move around and can possibly fall through the opening.

Repair and maintenance

Immediately replace or repair any loose or missing fasteners on the bed. Periodically check the tightness of fasteners holding the bed together, as well as the cross support rails holding the upper mattress.

Safe use

Teach your children not to push up on the underside of the bed, or to climb on it like a jungle gym. Proper safety is important at all times, and you may wish to also use a night light near the ladder so children can see the ladder steps in the dark.

If you follow these basic tips then you should get years of safe enjoyment out of your new bunk bed. For more bunk bed resources and tips you can visit

S.A. Smith is a freelance writer, editor, and contributor to the Loft Beds Bunk Beds resource site, and can be reached at

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Are loft beds (bunk beds) safe

By John Marcus

If you are trying to maximize the space in your room, consider purchasing a loft bed or bunk bed to elevate your sleeping area. With loft beds, the bed is elevated on a platform with space left underneath for living, working, or playing. Bunk beds work on the same principal, but with another bed underneath the top bunk. Both are popular with children and teens, who often have limited space in their rooms; however, many parents worry about their safety.

Each year, thousands of children are rushed to emergency rooms after falling from the top bunk of their bunk beds or loft beds, while many more receive less serious injuries that are not seen by a medical professional. Typically, the main reason of injury involving bunk beds or lofts beds is horseplay and not from improperly installed beds. Before you purchase bunk beds or loft beds for your child, consider the age of the child and plan to make rules regarding the use of the bed. Although younger children are thought to experience more injuries, the most problems occur with older children who are more apt to disregard rules and exhibit unsafe or risky behavior.

For the most part, bunk beds and loft beds are just as safe as conventional beds. For smaller children, consider designating the lower bunk as their bed instead of allowing them to regularly climb to the top bunk. Also, ensure the bed is properly maintained and meets all current safety regulations and standards. Additionally, approximately eight percent of bunk bed related falls and injuries that must seek medical attention are related directly to the ladder. In addition to ensuring the ladder is properly installed, instruct your child on the correct method of ascending and descending the ladder.

When you begin searching for an appropriate bunk bed or loft bed for your child, choose a bed that appeals to all the safety standards. A bunk bed should have guard rails that have no more than three and one-half inches of space between the rail and the mattress. This will prevent children from falling through the space and potentially injuring themselves. If necessary, you may need to install extra boards if the space between the guard rail and the mattress. Furthermore, the guard rail needs to extend no less than five inches above mattress so that your child will be unable to roll off the top bunk.

Another thing to keep in mind is that the bunk bed or loft bed your purchase has guard rails on both sides. Even though one side of the bed will be placed next to a wall, a guard rail is essential due to a child potentially falling next to the wall and becoming trapped between the wall and the bed frame. Again, the guard rail should be no greater than three and one-half inches above the bed frame. Also, you should ensure that the mattress purchased to fit the bunk bed or loft bed properly fits the frame. Many parents choose to use a preexisting mattress used on a child-sized bed that is smaller than a traditional twin bed frame. Children can potentially fall between the mattress and the frame in this situation, so you should ensure the mattress is of the proper size.

In addition to ensuring the mattress is of proper size, you should also check that the mattress foundation is properly suspended above the bottom bunk or the space below. If the bed sits on a wooden platform, consider reinforcing the mattress with wooden slats or metal straps. This will prevent the top bunk from collapsing, especially if the lower occupant is kicking or pushing the above mattress.

Bunk Bed Shopping – 10 Point Safety Checklist To Protect Your Children

By purchasing a quality, well constructed bunk bed or loft bed that meets all safety guidelines, you can make certain that your child will be safe and free from injury from the bed.

John Marcus specializes in Beds

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