



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Commerce**  
**Consumer Protection**

# Safety for babies and toddlers in the home



- 🏠 Choosing safe nursery items
- 🏠 Using baby products safely
- 🏠 Reducing hazards in your home

# Congratulations!

*Safety for babies in the home* will help you create a safe and secure environment for your baby.

There is a huge range of baby products and furniture available. This information is a guide to help you choose the safest products and use those products safely.

The booklet details ways to reduce or remove common hazards to avoid the risk of injury to your growing child.

There is also a list of key contacts if you need further information or assistance.

Remember, if you see or have recently purchased an item that does not appear to meet product safety standards, please contact the Department of Commerce.

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This publication is available in other formats to assist people with special needs. Call the Consumer Protection Advice Line on 1300 30 40 54 to discuss your requirements.

If you require an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 and ask for connection to 1300 30 40 54.

## **Disclaimer**

Information including advice (information) provided in this brochure is given in good faith and solely on the basis that you are responsible for making your own assessment of it and that you obtain your own independent advice with respect to matters relevant to you regarding the safe use of baby products. The information should not be construed to waive any legal obligations of entities including manufacturers, wholesalers or retailers of baby products.

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# Safe use of *baby bath supports*

Never leave a baby alone in a bath seat **for any reason**, without the supervision of a responsible adult.

A baby bath seat or support does not make it safe for you to leave your baby alone in the bath.

**The support is a bathing aid, NOT a safety device.**

Babies may slip through or climb out of the bath seat or support and can drown.

In a non-skid, slip-resistant tub, never use a baby bath seat or support that has suction cups. The suction cups won't stick to the bathtub, or they may detach suddenly.

## The law

The law requires that bath seats and cradles supplied since August 2004, must have a prescribed warning notice permanently attached in a prominent position.

Baby bath aids must carry the following warning:


 **WARNING**   
Children have **DROWNED**  
while using bath aids.

This is **NOT** a safety device.  
**ALWAYS** keep baby within arm's reach.  
**NEVER** leave a baby in the care of  
children.

The warning is attached to products to remind parents and carers that the products have been implicated in drowning. **Read the warning and take notice of the message.**

## Reducing the risk of drowning in the home

Young children have drowned in bathtubs, buckets, toilets, spas, hot tubs and other containers of water. Keep your child out of harm's way.

-  Never leave a baby alone in the bath for any reason – not even for a second. If you must leave, take the baby with you.

- 🏠 Never leave any containers of water unattended, such as buckets containing even a small amount of water. When you have finished using the container, always empty it immediately and store it away from young children.
- 🏠 Always secure a safety cover or barrier to prevent children from gaining access to spas or hot tubs when not in use. Some non-rigid covers, such as solar covers, can allow a small child to slip into the water while the cover appears to still be in place.
- 🏠 Keep the toilet lid down to prevent access to the water. Consider using a toilet clip to stop young children from opening the lids.
- 🏠 Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). It can be a lifesaver.



## Warning!

A bath support is not a safety device. Children have drowned even with bath supports in place when being bathed.

Never leave children unattended near water.

Young children can drown in bathtubs, buckets, toilets, spas, hot tubs and other containers of water.

## Take care with *baby walkers*

Always closely supervise your baby when using a walker, to protect your child from injury.

Baby walkers have been a popular nursery item for over 30 years.

There is growing concern, in Australia and overseas, about the dangers associated with baby walkers due to the high number of injuries related to their use. Most of the injuries are to the head and are suffered by children less than 12 months of age.

Baby walkers prematurely enable children to move freely and quickly around a room and provide very limited protection from hazards.

### Preventing injuries to infants

All new and secondhand baby walkers supplied in Western Australia since November 2002, must meet mandatory safety standards.

These standards aim to limit the risks of serious injury but do not replace the need for babies to be closely supervised when using a baby walker.

Compulsory safety features to meet the mandatory safety standard include:

1. Stability – a wide base to minimise the risk of the baby walker tipping over either forwards, backwards or sideways.
2. Minimisation of the risk of falls down stairs – normally achieved by friction strips or some other form of braking mechanism on the undercarriage that operates when the edge of the walker moves over a step.
3. Product warnings – consumer safety warnings state that a child should never be left unattended.

## Safety check

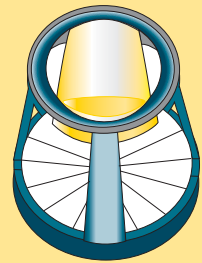
Make sure your baby walker has the following features:



Friction strips or other gripping mechanism to minimize the risk of falling down steps



Too wide to fit through doorway



Consider an activity centre that does not have wheels

## Before you buy

Consider alternative products that are likely to be just as entertaining but safer. Stationary activity centres for infants are now available and child safety specialists recommend them as a safer alternative to baby walkers.

Look for a label indicating that the baby walker complies with the mandatory Australian safety standard for baby walkers based on the US ASTM F977 safety standard.

## Extra safety checks

- 🏠 Make sure your baby fits properly into the baby walker and it supports your baby's weight.
- 🏠 Make sure your baby's feet can touch the floor while sitting in the walker.
- 🏠 Look for a baby walker with a wide base for stability and big wheels at least 50mm in diameter.
- 🏠 Check for any finger, arm or leg traps, sharp edges or pinch points.

## Making your home baby walker safe

- 🏠 Do not let your baby have access to areas which are not baby walker safe, eg slopes, sharp edges, hot items.
- 🏠 Only use the baby walker on flat, level surfaces.
- 🏠 Place child resistant barriers at the top of stairs.
- 🏠 Block access at floor level to open sliding glass doors or windows. Aluminium sliding tracks can cause walkers to topple.
- 🏠 Block access to heaters and fireplaces and check for electrical cords on floors that could cause the baby walker to topple.
- 🏠 Remove hazards that a child in a baby walker could have access to. As a guide, look for things that are less than 900mm from the floor.

## Warning!

Baby walkers are dangerous as they allow infants to move more quickly around the house.



- 🏠 Remove or tack down the edges of loose rugs or carpets.
- 🏠 Never use baby walkers in kitchens, bathrooms or laundries – there are too many hazards.
- 🏠 Never carry a baby walker while a child is in it, as it could cause a fall-related injury.
- 🏠 Follow the safety instructions provided with the baby walker, especially those for locking the frame into position and adjusting the seat.
- 🏠 Most importantly, **never leave a baby unsupervised in a baby walker.**



## Choosing and using *household cots*

Once you have chosen your baby's cot, it's vital that you follow some basic rules on using the cot safely at home.

### **Secondhand cots**

Many new parents are given used cots by friends or relatives. In these circumstances, parents need to examine the cot carefully to make sure it is safe.

Secondhand cots can be perfectly good, but check them carefully before using them.

Don't forget that cot standards are now more stringent – for very good reasons! Keep in mind that old cots may be worn or even broken.

Any cot sold in Western Australia must comply with the mandatory sections of the Australian/New Zealand Safety Standard for Children's Cots; AS/NZS 2172 Cots for Household Use.

For more information on this mandatory safety standard, or to obtain a copy, contact Standards Australia on 13 12 42.

### **The main risks with cots**

Most injuries to young children are due to falls from cots.

Children can also be hurt or could die if their head, arms or legs become stuck between the railings or drop-sides, or their clothing snags on protruding parts.

**Your baby will spend much of his or her first years in a cot, so it's very important you choose a cot that keeps your baby safe.**

## Tips for cot safety at home

- 🏠 Never place a cot under a window because of the risk of strangulation by curtain or blind cords. Easily accessible window ledges also make it easier for children to climb out of their cots.
- 🏠 Keep cots well away from heaters and electrical plugs to prevent burns, fire and electric shock.
- 🏠 Don't put cushions, bumpers or large toys in cots because these provide children with 'steps' to help them climb out.
- 🏠 Choking is a risk. Don't leave small objects on or near the cot. As a rule of thumb, if an object is smaller than a ping pong ball, it is a choking hazard.
- 🏠 Never use an electric blanket or hot water bottle in your baby's cot.
- 🏠 Don't hang pictures or mirrors over your baby's cot as they may fall.
- 🏠 Adjustable bases on cots should be moved to their lowest setting once your baby starts to roll.
- 🏠 Don't suspend mobiles above cots or leave children with toys that have long cords. These present a real strangulation risk.
- 🏠 If the cot breaks during use, it should be repaired immediately by a qualified person, or taken out of use. It's not worth the risk of injury to your child.

## Cot safety checklist

This checklist provides a quick reference for assessing cot safety.

### Does the cot comply with the mandatory safety standard?

An indication of whether a cot meets the mandatory safety standard is the presence of the Standards Australia logo. Ask the seller if the cot complies.

### Is the cot in good condition?

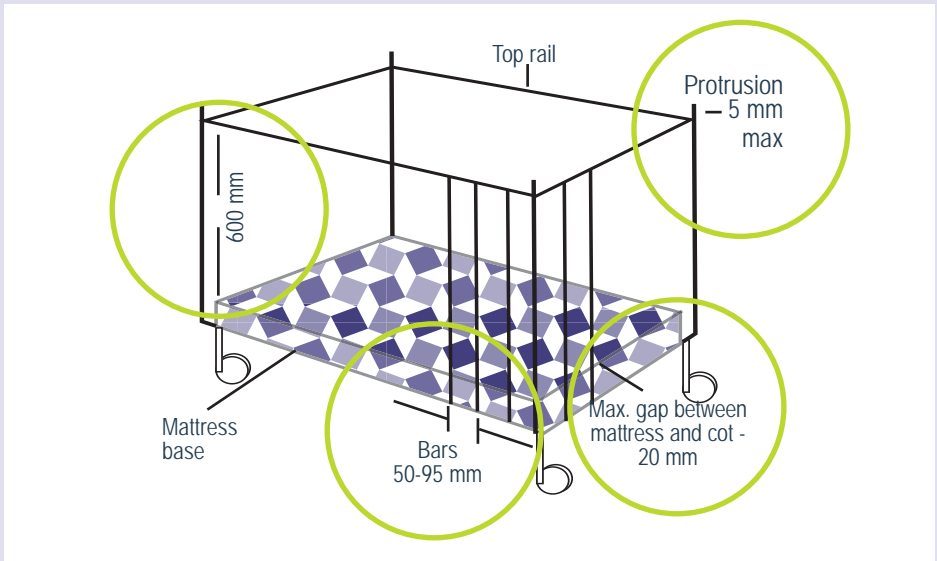
If you're buying a wooden cot, check its overall stability and that all rails and base slats are intact and not splintered.

If the cot is metal, make sure the rails and bars are not bent or out of shape, and do not have sharp edges.

### Does the cot meet the dimensions set down in the mandatory standard?

Having a safe gap-width in the cot structure reduces the risk of children becoming trapped.

- ▶ **Finger traps** – there should be no spaces between 5mm and 12mm wide.
- ▶ **Arm and leg traps** – there should be no spaces between 30mm and 50mm.
- ▶ **Bars** – the gap between bars should be no less than 50mm and no more than 95mm.



- ▶ **Head traps and 'fall-through' hazards** – there should be no spaces 95mm or wider.
- ▶ **Protrusions** – there should be no protrusions that jut out more than 5mm. Clothing can get snagged on knobs, decorative features, wing nuts, sidecatches, etc and cause distress or strangulation.

**Are the edges of the cot smooth and rounded with nothing protruding?**

This helps prevent injuries from sharp objects and your child's clothing from snagging on protrusions.

**Is the base of the cot adjustable?**

There must be no more than two heights for the base of the cot. When the base is at the high setting with the dropside up, there must not be less than 400mm between the top of the mattress base and the top of the lowest cot side.

When the base is at the low setting with the dropside up, there must not be less than 600mm between the top of the mattress base and the top of the lowest cot side.

**Is the cot sturdy?**

Give the cot a quick shake and make sure the sides, ends and base don't feel unstable.

**Does the cot have drop sides?**

Ensure the catches lock into place properly.

The cot should be designed so it has:

- ▶ two fastening devices separated by a distance of at least 850mm that have to operate simultaneously; or
- ▶ a system that requires at least two separate but simultaneous actions operating on different principles; or
- ▶ a system that requires at least two consecutive actions operating on different principles; or
- ▶ the access fastening device is inaccessible to the child within the cot.

Make sure the drop side is firmly attached to the cot and operates smoothly.

**Are there any footholds that allow your child to climb?**

Most cot injuries occur when kids climb out and fall, so don't allow the cot to give them a helping hand, eg horizontal bars and ornamentation provide footholds.

**Does the cot have castors or wheels?**

If the cot has four castors, at least two must be fitted with brakes. Children can sometimes move a cot into a dangerous location if it is on wheels.

**Is there a mattress with the cot?**

A mattress should fit snugly into the base of a cot with no gaps more than 20mm wide. If the mattress is not a snug fit, there is a real risk of suffocation to very young infants due to them rolling down into the gap.

When the cot base is at the lowest setting, with the drop side up, there must be 500mm between the top of the mattress and the top rail.

**Are instructions or safety warnings supplied with the cot?**

When you buy a new cot, you should get a simple leaflet on all the correct assembly and safety guides. The cot should also have a tag which states the recommended mattress size. The information should include the name and address of the manufacturer.



## Babies and *portable folding cots*

Portable folding cots are easy to transport, compact and can be used where needed, but take care with their assembly.

Unlike standard cots, portable cots are designed to be used only for short, temporary sleeping arrangements for infants up to 15 kilograms.

You must always follow the safety and assembly instructions when using a portable folding cot.

Children have been injured in portable cots that have collapsed accidentally, and babies have died after becoming wedged between a mattress and the side of the cot.

### Buying a portable cot

As a new parent you should buy a portable folding cot that meets minimum design, construction, performance and safety requirements, which includes safe use labels and markings.

### Mandatory standards

Mandatory standards for portable folding cots were introduced in March 2009. All portable folding cots sold after this date must comply with key safety features of AS/NZS 2195 Folding cots – safety requirements.

## Warning!

If a folding cot accidentally collapses when in use, it can trap a child around the neck and cause strangulation. The soft mesh sides of the collapsed cot can smother or cover a child making it difficult for the child to breathe and can lead to suffocation.



## Key safety requirements

There are a number of key safety requirements to look for when buying a portable cot.

### Safety information

Portable folding cots must have permanent warnings and safety information that is easy to see when setting up the cot.

You should always follow the assembly instructions closely when setting up portable folding cots. It is important to read the detailed instructions and warnings on the cot to make sure your child is safe.

### Locking devices

All locking devices must:

- 🏠 have a clearly marked locked position;

- 🏠 have secure latches to prevent the cot from accidental collapse;
- 🏠 have no dangerous protrusions (snagging) and gaps (entrapment); and
- 🏠 be designed so that the child cannot open the mechanism causing the cot to collapse.

### Mattress and base

If the mattress is not the right size or type for the cot, a child is at risk of being suffocated or strangled.

The base of the portable cot should be designed to provide a firm flat support for a mattress. You should only use the mattress provided with the cot and it must fit snugly and touch the cot on every side. Loose fitting mattresses may create spaces where a small baby could be trapped and suffocated.

Do not add an extra mattress, padding, quilts, lamb's wool or soft toys under or over the mattress. Small children can become wedged between the mattresses and suffocate.

### Minimum measurements

To stop children climbing out of the cot, the mandatory standard sets out the following minimum measurements.

- 🏠 When no mattress is fitted, the vertical distance from the top of the base to the top edge of the lowest side or end of the cot must be a minimum of 550mm.
- 🏠 When a mattress is fitted, the vertical distance from the top of the mattress to the top edge of the lowest side or end of the cot must be a minimum of 500mm.
- 🏠 For cots fitted with an upper base setting, designed to be used as a bassinette or change table, the vertical distance from the upper base to the top of the lowest side of the cot must be a minimum of 250mm with or without the mattress fitted.
- 🏠 There must be no feature or accessory up to 500mm above the mattress base as it could provide a foothold for a child to climb out and fall or cause the cot to tilt.

### Safety check

- Do not use a portable cot if your child weighs more than 15 kg, or check instructions for your particular model.
- Check all locking devices are properly latched before putting your child in the cot. Stop using the cot before your child is capable of releasing the locking devices that collapse the cot.
- Do not put pillows or an additional mattress in a portable cot. Babies can become trapped between the mattress and cot sides and may suffocate. Older children may use the extra height to climb out.
- Check vinyl or fabric covered rails frequently for tears. A teething child can chew off pieces and choke.
- Do not place toys or extra bedding in the cot as children can use them to climb out, risking injury from falls.
- Regularly check locking devices to make sure they are operating properly and have not become loose.
- Keep the portable cot clear of curtain or blind cords as they are a strangulation hazard.

## Securing cords for *curtains and blinds*


Unsecured curtain and blind cords can be a real danger to your children.

Children can get caught in the cords and be strangled. This can happen when the cords are too long or they end in a loop, and when furniture or bedding is too close to windows


Making your curtains and blinds safe is inexpensive and easy.


Check all the blinds and curtains in your home and then follow these tips to remove any hazards permanently.


### Making your existing curtains and blinds safe


 Cords ending in a loop are particularly risky. Cut the cord to get rid of the loop\* and install tassels (see illustration A). Cords should end at least 1.6 metres above the ground so children cannot reach them.

\* Make sure the blind will continue to be operational if adjusted.

 Replace cords with curtain or blind wands.

 Where cords cannot be cut, such as with some vertical blinds, a tie down or tension device can be used to pull the cord tight and secure it to the floor or wall (see illustration B).

 Never put a cot, bed, high chair or playpen near a window or patio door where a child can reach a curtain or blind cord.

 Keep sofas, chairs, tables, shelves or bookcases away from windows to prevent children climbing up and reaching curtain or blind cords.

### Warning!

Children can strangle themselves on curtain and blind cords. Making your curtains and blinds safe is easy and not expensive.

## New blinds and curtains

Since April 2004, the following mandatory safety standards apply for the supply and installation of corded internal window coverings.

🏠 Looped cords must end more than 1.6 metres from the base of a blind or curtain when in a lowered position.

OR

🏠 A tie down or tension device to pull the looped cord tight and secure it to the wall or floor must be supplied and installed on vertical blinds and draperies that need a continuous loop less than 1.6 metres from the base of the window.

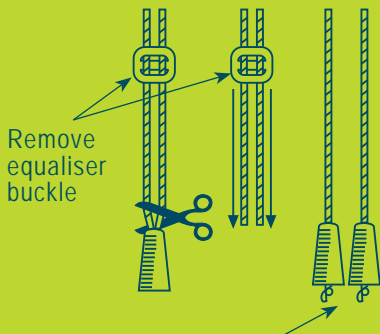
🏠 A warning label and tag must be included.

AND

🏠 Where the window covering is to be installed by a consumer, written installation instructions for both the covering and any safety devices must also be supplied.

Products supplied or installed after April 2004 must comply with the mandatory standard for internal curtain and blind cords. If you have purchased a new product after that date that does not comply with the standard, please contact Consumer Protection on 1300 30 40 54.

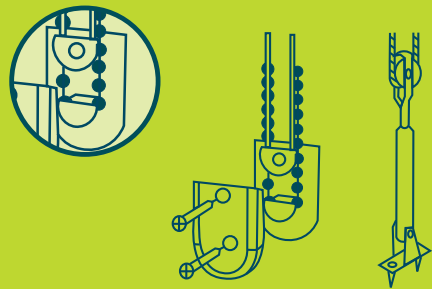
### A - Cut looped cords



Knot cord to hold tassel

**Note:** Do not tie the cords together because this creates a new loop in which a child could become entangled.

### B - Tie down cords that cannot be cut



#### Roller blinds or vertical blinds:

A special tie-down device can be used for blinds with continuous loop cords.

*Note: The above products are available from hardware stores and curtain shops.*

## *Making your home safer* **furniture**

Furniture that we all take for granted can be a danger to children.

Children do not always use furniture in the way that it is intended. Take a bookcase for example. To a child it might look like a ladder, which they can climb to reach something above. All it takes is the weight of a small child climbing on the bookcase for it to topple it over.

Furniture falling onto children can cause serious injuries, such as fractures, head injuries and, in the worst case, death.

Falls or collisions involving tables, chairs and stools can cause eye injuries, fractures, cuts and sprains.

Most injuries can be avoided by choosing safer furniture, securing unstable furniture, and by simple changes to the environment.

There are steps you can take to make furniture in your home safer for children.



*Corner protectors are available from retailers of baby and child products.*

Have you ever considered that household furniture such as a TV, chest of drawers, or even a chair could be a dangerous piece of furniture to your children?

Simple things such as choosing tables with rounded edges, moving unstable furniture away from where children play and securing tall furniture to a wall can make your home safer.

### Safety check when buying furniture

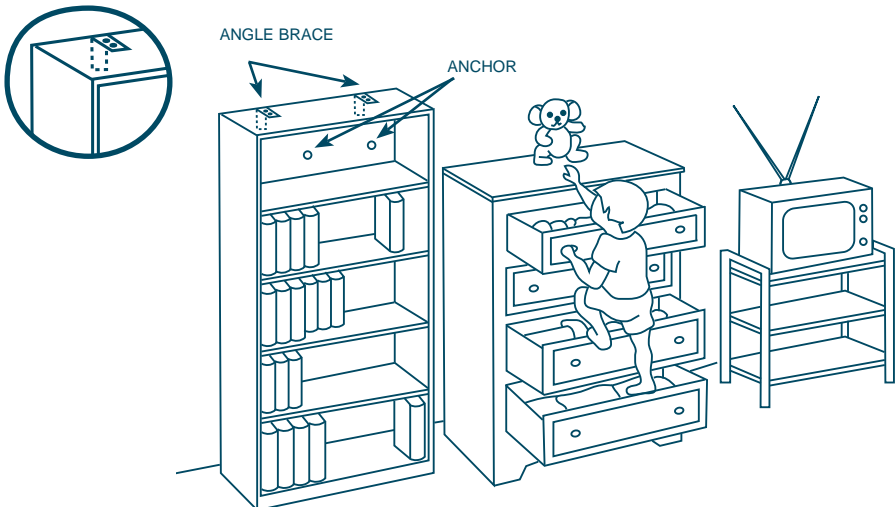
- 🏠 Look for storage furniture such as bookcases and chests of drawers that have a broad and stable base instead of legs, and check to make sure that the drawers do not fall out easily.
- 🏠 Test the furniture in the shop. If buying a chest of drawers for example, pull out the top drawers and apply a little pressure to see how sturdy they are. Children often climb up the open drawers of furniture.
- 🏠 Select tables that will not tip if you sit on them.
- 🏠 Glass tables should be made with thick, toughened glass and should be treated with care.
- 🏠 Choose stable chairs, which have non-slip leg ends rather than those with wheels or castors.
- 🏠 Before buying a chair sit on it and lean backward and forward to check that it is stable, that is, it does not slip out from under you when you lean forward or back. Beware of light plastic chairs – they are often as fragile as they look.

## Safety check for securing furniture

- 🏠 Secure all tall furniture to a stable wall using angle braces available from hardware stores. As a guide, any furniture unit one metre or higher should be secured.
  - 🏠 Install corner protectors on sharp edges of tables, benches and counters. Position furniture where it will cause the least obstruction.
  - 🏠 Televisions on furniture can also tip over onto children. Make sure that the stand you buy is stable and strong enough to take your TV.
- Place the TV on low furniture, as far back as possible. Ensure wall brackets and straps are used when supplied, or when the size or position of the TV presents a hazard.
- 🏠 Discourage children from climbing onto furniture to play. Items attractive to children should not be placed on climbable furniture.
  - 🏠 Avoid placing children on tables. Never put a child in a bouncer on a table.

## Furniture can tip over on children

**WARNING:** Use angle braces or anchors to secure furniture to wall.





## Watch out for *skimmer boxes*

Make sure the skimmer boxes on your pool or spa are safe for your small child.

In the past, children have received fatal or serious injuries as a result of sitting in a pool's skimmer box.

Skimmer boxes can often be found at the side of swimming pools or spas. They are designed to help remove material, including leaves and dirt, from the water.

To a small child, an uncovered skimmer box may look like a potty or seat. They are a safety hazard for small children.

If a child sits in an uncovered skimmer box, the immense suction of the pool's filter pump forms an instant seal between a child's bottom and the edge of the skimmer box resulting in horrific, and sometimes fatal, injuries.

In October 1988, the Commissioner for Consumer Protection introduced a Product Safety Order to ensure that all newly installed pools and spas have safe skimmer boxes. However, skimmer boxes installed before 1988 may be unsafe.

Secondhand fibreglass pools moved from an old to a new location could also be unsafe if they were manufactured before 1988.

### **Warning!**

To a small child, an uncovered skimmer can look like a potty or seat.

But if a child sits in it, the immense suction of the pool's filter pump forms an instant seal between your child and the edge of the skimmer box causing severe, and sometimes fatal, injuries.

## Is your skimmer box safe?

If your pool or spa was installed after October 1988, you should have one of the new style, safe skimmer boxes.

They have a permanently fastened cover and a safety skirt so a child can't sit in the box.

However, if your pool is old or secondhand, there is a risk that the pool in your backyard is a potential killer.

Older style skimmer boxes installed before October 1988 should be fitted with an approved safety device.

## How to make your skimmer box safe

If you think your skimmer box is unsafe, take the following action immediately:

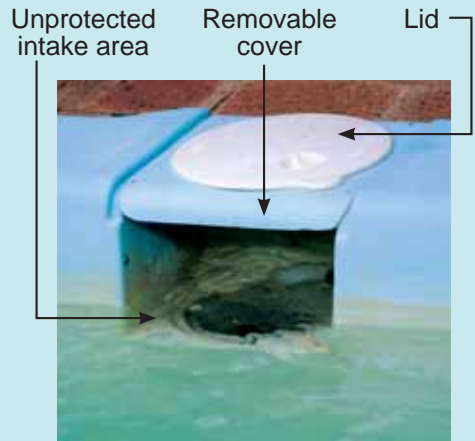
- 🏠 buy a low cost conversion kit, which is available from local swimming pool suppliers; or
- 🏠 place a bar or other fitting over the skimmer box to prevent children from sitting in the box; or
- 🏠 permanently fix the cover over the skimmer box so it can only be removed using a tool.

## Safety check

### ✓ Safe skimmer box



### ✗ Unsafe skimmer box



## Where to find *more information*

### **Department of Commerce**

Advice Line: 1300 30 40 54

[www.commerce.wa.gov.au/product safety](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/product%20safety)

### **Kidsafe WA**

Phone: 9340 8509

[www.kidsafewa.com.au](http://www.kidsafewa.com.au)

### **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission**

Phone: 1300 302 502

Product Safety Australia: [www.productsafety.gov.au](http://www.productsafety.gov.au)



## **Department of Commerce**

### **Consumer Protection Division**

#### **Advice Line 1300 30 40 54**

(for the cost of a local call statewide)

8.30am - 5.00pm weekdays

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