

NO. 70: HIGH CHAIRS (REVISED August 1990)

PRODUCT SAFETY FACT SHEET

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates that in 1989, 7,700 children under five years of age received hospital emergency room treatment as a result of accidents involving high chairs.

Entrapment

The Commission is aware that deaths have occurred to children whose head became stuck when they slid down between the tray and seat of a high chair.

- Make sure the chair has a restraining strap that you use every time the child is in the chair so the child cannot slide under the tray.

Falls from the Chair

Falls, the accident most frequently related to high chairs, can be serious. An infant under one year of age is especially vulnerable to injury as the infant's skull provides only limited protection to the brain. If the head is struck in a fall—particularly a fall from an elevated surface such as a high chair—the injury could interfere with a child's normal development.

Most falls from high chairs resulted when restraints were not secured or when children sitting in a high chair were not closely supervised.

To help prevent falls, most high chairs rely upon a waist strap to discourage standing up in the chair, and a crotch strap to prevent the child from slipping under the tray. On many older high chairs, the only restraint was a crotch strap attached between the tray and front edge of the seat which was ineffective.

To make high chairs safer, a voluntary industry standard was developed which addresses these and other problems. High chairs which meet the voluntary standard have restraining straps that function independently of the tray. Many high chairs tested to meet the safety requirements of

the voluntary standard have a label which indicates compliance.

Restraining straps are not foolproof. Children have squirmed out of waist straps, broken them, or unbuckled them. To help prevent injury, children must be carefully supervised while they are seated in the high chair.

To reduce the risk of falls from high chairs:

- Compare the sturdiness of straps and belts in different models when purchasing a new high chair.
- Do not buy a chair with a strap that is difficult to fasten as you may be tempted not to use it while your child is in the chair. Nor should the strap be "easy" to undo by the child.
- Use the safety belt every time the child is in the chair.
- Be sure the tray is locked securely in place each time the child is placed in the high chair. If a tray no longer locks properly, it should be repaired or replaced promptly. The feeding tray does not take the place of a restraining strap. Safety straps must be fastened to hold the child in the chair.
- Never allow a child to stand up in a high chair.

Fall or Collapse of the High Chair

Another type of accident involves a high chair which collapses or falls over, with or without a child in it.

A child may push off with hands or feet from a table, stand up in a high chair or rock it back and forth and cause it to fall. Some chairs fall when older brothers or sisters climb or pull on them.

A high chair may also fall over when a child tries to climb into it unassisted or pulls on it in an attempt to stand up or maintain balance.

A folding high chair can collapse if the locking device fails or is released accidentally,

or is not fully engaged when the chair is set up. This can be caused by the poor construction or deterioration of the locking device, failure to lock the chair properly, violent rocking of the chair, or kicking the device itself.

To avoid such accidents:

- Select a sturdy chair that has a wide base for stability. When in use, place it on a level surface.
- Be sure that the locking device on a folding high chair is secure each time you set the chair up. Check the locking device periodically, particularly if your child rocks or kicks the chair.
- Keep the high chair far enough away from a table, counter, or wall to prevent the

child from using any of these as a push-off point.

- Don't let children play around a high chair or climb into it unassisted.
- Always supervise young children while they are in the high chair, and do not allow older children to hang on the high chair when a youngster is in it.
- When a high chair is not in use, or is folded up, place it where it will not be easily knocked over.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent regulatory agency charged with reducing unreasonable risks of injury associated with consumer products. CPSC is headed by five Commissioners appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

To report a product hazard or a product-related injury, write to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207, or call the toll-free hotline: 800-638-2772. A teletypewriter for the deaf is available on the following numbers: National 800-638-8270, Maryland only 800-492-8104.

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