

THE PROS AND PITFALLS OF BABY GEAR

When Selecting Baby Equipment, Safety Comes First

Few things bring more excitement into a household than the arrival of a baby. In the months leading up to the big event, new parents-to-be go on happy shopping sprees, purchasing everything their new bundle of joy might possibly need. From bottles to bassinets, today's stores feature a mind-boggling myriad of adorably enticing baby gear. It is important to always remember, though, when selecting baby equipment safety must come first.

It is unfortunate but true that some baby equipment manufacturers have forgotten that crucial rule. Cute does not necessarily equate with safe. The very latest bells and whistles may actually harm your precious baby, rather than protect him. So before you purchase one single piece of baby gear, do your homework. Educate yourself on baby equipment recalls, and don't forget to ask your chiropractic doctor what gear is best –and worst – for your baby's health and safety.

What Was That? Ask My Chiropractor About Baby Gear?

Some baby equipment can actually hinder your child's motor skill development, or even harm his fragile skeletal system. So include your chiropractor in making decisions about what baby equipment is best for your little one's health, not just cute.

Are Walkers Good For Your Baby?

Contrary to popular opinion, a baby walker does *not* help your child learn to walk. Quite a bit of scientific research has been conducted on this subject, and the overall consensus is that baby walkers actually hinder the development of motor skills and coordination. Baby walkers also put your child at risk for serious injury. Several studies have shown that the use of baby walkers is the number one cause of fall-related injuries.

The use of a baby walker also puts your child's spinal development at risk. Have you ever noticed that as babies learn to sit up, they seldom have perfectly erect posture? The reason is that they are still developing the needed bone strength and muscular coordination to do so. Baby walkers force a very erect, rigid posture that, many times, your baby's body is not prepared to assume. This forced positioning can result in a misalignment of spinal bones, leading to a variety of health problems for your child.

Spinal misalignment in children, called vertebral subluxation, has been directly linked to infant colic, ear infections, sinus problems, neck pain and even a predisposition to muscle sprains and strains.

The good news is that your chiropractor can gently and painlessly adjust your baby's vertebral column in order to correct any spinal misalignment and restore perfect balance.

Many mothers nowadays schedule regular chiropractic visits for their children to protect their general wellness and optimize healthy development. Even newborns can benefit from chiropractic care to help counteract any spinal trauma occurring during the birth process.

Buying The Best High Chair For Your Baby

With so many different types of baby high chairs on the market, it can be difficult to figure out which is the best. As with all baby equipment, safety comes first when deciding what to buy. Any high chair you consider should have a safety harness or belt, preferably one that fits across the hips and between the legs. Also be sure that the tray locks securely onto the chair.

Wooden high chairs are frequently a popular choice with parents who like the classic look of a high gloss wooden chair. Unfortunately, these modern wood high chairs are more likely to show wear and tear as well as stains. Typically, a better choice is a high chair made of plastic or metal. They clean up easily, are highly durable and usually have a comfortable padded seat to cushion your baby's lower back and bottom.

There is one cardinal rule when it comes to high chairs, and that rule is *never leave your child unattended in a high chair*. And always take the time to properly secure your child in the safety harness. If the harness is missing or the high chair does not offer this feature, do not use it. Remember, safety first. Children, especially toddlers, can climb out of high chair seats and fall, or rock the high chair until it topples over.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in 2003 alone an estimated 9,200 children under the age of five suffered serious injury related to high chair falls. These high chair injuries most frequently involved the head or face, and resulted in abrasions, cuts, concussions and even skull fractures. Head injuries can also result in misalignment of the neck and spine, causing a long-lasting cascade of health issues.

Baby Pacifiers – To Use Or Not To Use

Babies are born with the need to suckle, and a pacifier can help fill that need. But what are the long-term effects of pacifier use?

In a report by the American Academy of Pediatrics, it was found that children who used pacifiers were more likely to suffer ear infections than those who did not use pacifiers. Additionally, prolonged pacifier use has been linked to a variety of dental health problems including gum disease, dental arch malformation, excessive overbite, and jaw misalignment.

Jaw misalignment from pacifier use has far-reaching health consequences, triggering conditions such as TMD, or temporomandibular dysfunction, headaches, earaches, and vertebral misalignment.

Breaking The Pacifier Habit

Now that you know how damaging long-term use of a pacifier can be, are you wondering how to break your child of the pacifier habit – with as little drama as possible? Here are a few tips to help you and your toddler through this trying, and sometimes traumatic, process.

- If you have not already done so, begin making the switch from the bottle to a cup.
- Let your child have a role in the decision-making process. In the beginning, explain that he has a choice of when to use his pacifier. Gradually, limit those choices until he no longer asks for his pacifier.
- Children frequently use pacifiers to soothe frustration. Help your child learn to control his frustration by verbally expressing the problem.
- Boredom is sometimes a compelling reason for pacifier use. When you see your little one becoming bored, redirect his attention toward a fun activity. Try singing or nursery rhymes that involve hand movements (“Itsy, bitsy spider” is a personal favorite).

By doing your homework before purchasing baby equipment, following safety recommendations, and keeping an open line of communication with your chiropractor, bringing home baby will be the beginning of exciting milestones, wonderful memories, and life-long good health.