

- 5mm, that an infant could fall on or snag clothing on
- A minimum depth of 600mm from the mattress base to the lowest point on any side or end
- There is to be no horizontal or diagonal bars or other fixtures that would allow a child to climb over the sides
- A permanent warning and information label on the mattress base

### Buying second-hand

If you're buying a second-hand cot, check that it meets current New Zealand safety standards, check for general wear and tear and make sure all the pieces are intact. Also check that the drop-side mechanism works smoothly and stays in the 'up' position, that there are no protrusions on the top rails and that there is no peeling paint.

If it's an older cot and you're unsure whether the paint is lead-free, talk to a Health Protection Officer at a public health service as paint can be tested for lead free of charge. Lead paint is poisonous and it only takes a small amount in the mouth to poison an infant.

### Cots

A cot will probably be your baby's bed until he is two or three years old. It should be strong and sturdy without cracked or broken slats, with no jagged points or edges. You can use your cot from the day your baby is born or you can use a bassinet or Moses basket for the first few weeks, or months, and then move your baby to a cot.

Cots come in many different shapes, sizes, colours and designs. Some cots can be converted into a toddler bed or a sofa for later on. Oval shaped cots can often be converted into a bed or chair.

Most cots have two or three height settings for the mattress base. This is so when your child is small you have it on the higher setting to make it easier for you to lift him out without straining your back. Then, as he gets bigger and shows signs of possibly climbing out, you can move the base down to the lower setting.

A drop down side also helps with lifting your child out, especially when he gets bigger and you have already moved the base to the lower setting.

Some wooden cots also have a teething rail (a protective plastic coating around the edges), to prevent your baby from leaving teeth marks in the paint and woodwork. ➤

## Things to consider before you buy:

- \* Before you head out to buy your cot, measure how much space you have in the nursery – the last thing you want after searching for the perfect cot is to find it doesn't fit in the bedroom! Also consider window heights and window sill protrusions, positions of any wall units, space for the changing table, accessories, etc.
- \* Make a prioritised list of any particular features that you want, such as colour, style, design, size, material, etc.
- \* If you're limited by space, opt for a cot that is slimmer and light in colour, as this will make the room appear bigger. For larger bedrooms, darker coloured cots and accessories work equally well.
- \* The advantage of a larger cot is that your baby will have more room to play in the cot. Also, if you're planning on using it well into the toddler years, it may be more practical. However, small cots are perfectly adequate for a growing baby.
- \* If you're short on storage, look for a cot that comes with a drawer underneath. This is great for storing linen, nappies and toys.
- \* Consider whether you want a fixed or a drop side. Some cots have 'nudge and lift' mechanisms so you can operate them with one hand. Other cots have a trigger mechanism, a foot pedal or a couple of catches to undo.
- \* Test how low the drop side goes and make sure it allows you to easily pick up your baby and put him down without straining your back.
- \* Check how many base levels the cot can be adjusted to for accommodating your growing baby. Most have two or three positions but two is generally fine for most people's needs.
- \* Choosing a cot with wheels on the bottom is a good idea if you want to be able to move it from one room to another. It also makes for easier cleaning under and around the cot.
- \* Consider how long you plan on using your cot, or for how many children – a better quality cot will likely better last the 'wear and tear' distance for subsequent babies.
- \* If you prefer a cot that adjusts as your baby grows, consider one that converts into a toddler bed.
- \* Don't forget you'll need to buy a mattress separately for your cot. Make sure it is the right size for your type of cot.