



Safe
use

safe products

Bunk Beds

Bunk beds can be dangerous, especially for very young children. Most bunk bed injuries happen when children fall from the top bunk. Children can also get stuck in gaps or get their clothes caught on tall corner posts. This can often lead to serious or even fatal injuries.

“Bunk bed” refers to either beds which have one bed stacked over the top of another or which has the upper surface of a mattress over 800 mm from the floor.

There is an Australian/New Zealand product standard that applies to bunk beds – AS/NZS 4220:2003. This standard is voluntary and addresses the design and construction of bunk beds. While this standard is not mandatory, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs strongly advocates compliance with the standard.

Tips for safe use:

- ✓ Bunk beds are not suitable for children under 6 years of age.
- ✓ Use the top bunk only for sleeping. Falls while playing on the top bunk make up most of the injuries.
- ✓ Check ladders and guardrails are fixed and stable.
- ✓ Check regularly for wear and tear. Always repair any damage immediately.
- ✓ Make sure that the mattresses are suitable for the bunk bed in question – for example if you are replacing mattresses make sure you check the effect their size will have in relation to the height of the guardrail.
- ✓ Pay particular attention when using bunk beds that are not familiar to you (for example in holiday accommodation).

Positioning of a bunk bed

- Ensure the bunk bed is in a safe position within the room/ immediate area – keep bunk beds away from other items of furniture that children may be tempted to try and climb onto.
- Keep bunk beds away from windows.
- Allow a space of at least two metres from ceiling fittings, fans or lights.
- Make sure curtain and blind cords are not accessible to children from the bunk bed.

What to look for – safe design and construction

(for more details refer to AS/NZS 4220:2003)

Guardrails

- Look for bunk beds with guardrails or bed-ends on all sides of the top bunk.
- Guardrails should be either non detachable or if detachable then they should be incapable of being moved by a force of 100 N (10Kg) in any direction.
- The minimum vertical distance between the top of the guardrail and top of the mattress should be at least 160mm above the top of the mattress – about the length of a ball-point pen. This will prevent children rolling out.
- Guardrails should be smooth and free from protrusions or potential snag points.
- If there is an opening to provide easier access to the bed then the opening should have a minimum width of 300mm and a maximum of 400mm up to the maximum height of the guardrail.

Gaps

- Check that there are no gaps of 95mm to 230mm in any part on the bunk beds, including guardrails and rungs on ladders. Small bodies can fit through but heads can get stuck.

Protrusions

- Check that there are no protrusions from the bunk bed more than 8mm. Anything sticking out from the bunks could catch clothing and create a strangling risk.
- Make sure all nuts, bolts and other fasteners on bunk beds are flat or recessed and smooth and do not create a sharp point, edge or snag hazard.

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