



Furniture stability

From a child's point of view, your home looks like a big playground. But there are hidden dangers they don't recognise.

Unstable furniture can tip over when a child climbs or pulls on it. This can cause serious injuries if it lands on top of them. It can even be fatal. Since 2000, at least 27 people have died in Australia due to toppling furniture. Many more have been admitted to emergency rooms with injuries. Children under the age of 5 are particularly at risk and suffer the highest proportion of toppling furniture deaths and injuries in Australia.

Of these injuries half were to children four years old and under and 80 per cent of incidents occurred in the home.

The three most common furniture items were chairs, chests of drawers/tallboys and tables/benches/desks and the most common electrical appliance by far was the television.

Think safety first with these helpful tips.

- **Look for stable-based furniture** – Choose furniture with a broad, solid base and wide legs to keep them well balanced. They are less likely to tip if a small child climbs onto them.
- **Test before you buy** – Test the furniture while you're in the shop. Apply a little pressure to make sure it's stable. Check any type of furniture that has drawers as young children may try to climb up them like a flight of stairs. Pull out the top drawer and press down on the inside to check how stable it is. Make sure the drawers don't fall out easily.
- **Secure any unstable furniture and especially large television sets** – If you have any doubts about whether your furniture is stable, secure it using furniture straps, angle braces or anchors screwed into wall studs.
- **Choose safe tables** – Choose tables that won't tip over if a child climbs on them. Glass tables should be made of toughened glass.
- **Use child-resistant locks on all drawers** – Locks are a good way of preventing children from opening drawers and using them as steps. Use locks for cupboards that store chemicals, cleaning fluids and other poisons.
- **Don't tempt your child** – Never place items like feeding bottles, toys or remote controls on top of furniture. This will encourage your child to climb up and reach for them.

In Western Australia property managers and landlords must allow tenants, who submit a request form, to attach furniture to a wall to prevent a child, or a person with a disability, from being hurt or killed.

The request can only be refused in very limited circumstances, such as when the home is heritage listed or if the walls contain asbestos.

In the case of furnished rental properties, landlords should affix furniture prior to tenants moving in.

Disclaimer – The information contained in this fact sheet is provided as general information and a guide only. It should not be relied upon as legal advice or as an accurate statement of the relevant legislation provisions. If you are uncertain as to your legal obligations, you should obtain independent legal advice.

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