

Lifting children in/out of cots and highchairs or on/off change tables

August 2011

What is the problem?

Workers experience musculoskeletal injuries (eg sprains, strains, fractures and soft tissue injuries) from the design, placement and characteristics of equipment children are lifted onto/into (eg cots, highchairs and change tables).

The implementation of risk controls must not introduce any new hazards or risks to workers or children.

What are the risks?

Workers are at risk of injuries from bending, twisting and reaching due to:

- poorly designed work areas
- insufficient space
- equipment that is poorly positioned
- equipment with a low working height (eg cots with bases below mid thigh height)
- equipment that is not adjustable (eg cots with fixed sides)
- equipment that does not have removable parts (eg fixed highchair trays)
- mismatch between equipment adjustability for children and desired adjustability for workers
- effort involved in lifting and lowering children
- unexpected or unplanned movement by children

What are solutions to the problems?

Organisations are encouraged to discuss how and when children are lifted onto equipment so workers' and children's needs are addressed.

Cots

- Reduce the distance the worker needs to bend and reach to lift the child by using cots:
 - that are designed for day nurseries with a higher working height
 - in the higher base position if the cot is designed with two base positions. Ensure this meets the children's safety requirements (eg child cannot climb out)
 - with drop-down sides.
- Prepare cots before children are lifted so sides are dropped down.
- Provide sufficient access around cots so workers can lift or lower children without reaching over the length of the cot.

- Maintain wheels, wheel-locks and drop-down sides on cots so they work effectively.
- If cots are wheeled:
 - provide appropriately sized wheels
 - assess floor surfaces for minimal friction for cots to be wheeled with minimal resistance. Modify existing floor surfaces if necessary.

Highchairs

- Use highchairs that have removable or adjustable trays so the tray can be put in place after children are seated.
- Use height adjustable highchairs for children to safely seat themselves.
- Maintain wheels and wheel-locks on highchairs.
- If highchairs are wheeled:
 - they should have appropriately sized wheels with lockable castors
 - assess floor surfaces for minimal friction so they can be wheeled with minimal resistance. Modify existing floor surfaces if necessary.

Change tables

- Use change tables that provide a space for workers feet underneath the table so they can stand close to the child being changed.
- Use change tables that are height adjustable to waist height for the worker.
- Use change tables with steps that have:
 - a handrail so children who can walk access the change table themselves
 - removable, retractable and lockable steps so workers do not have to reach over the steps when changing children
 - easy access so the worker does not have to repeatedly bend to access or put away the steps.
- Ensure steps are well maintained and easy for the worker to move.
- Provide sufficient access around the change table so workers can change the child from a front position (child's feet facing worker's stomach).
- Position changing supplies within easy reach to reduce the need for the worker to repeatedly twist, bend or use an extended reach.

A Health and Safety Solution Lifting children in/out of cots and highchairs or on/off change tables

Systems

- Assess if, how and when each child is lifted onto, into or from equipment.
- Provide reporting processes so safety issues can be identified and fixed as soon as possible.
- Provide workers with training, information, instruction and supervision on documented work procedures and use of equipment.
- Schedule and record regular inspections, and maintenance of all areas of the workplace and equipment.
- Use a system to rotate tasks among workers to reduce their overall exposure to the risks associated with these tasks.

The problem



Cot base is non-adjustable and close to the ground, requiring workers to reach and bend to lift children into/from the cot.

The problem



A change table without steps requires workers to bend, reach and twist to lift children onto/from the change table.

The change table is designed so the child is side on to the worker when being changed, requiring reaching and twisting.

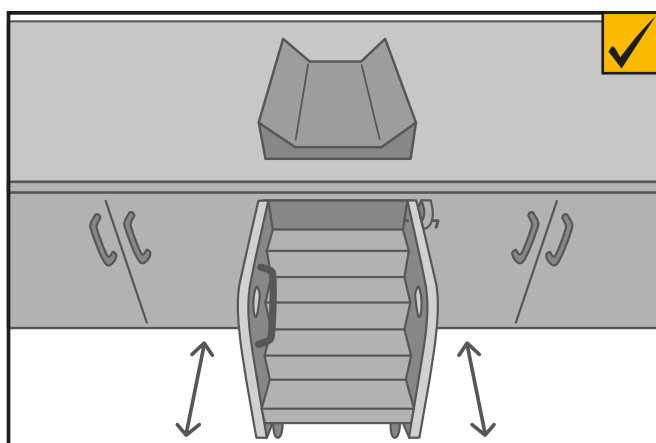
A solution



Cot is designed with a higher working height, reducing the workers need to reach and bend to lift children into/from the cot.

Cot has appropriately sized wheels and wheel-locks and worker can stand with their feet under the cot to reduce reaching distances.

A solution



A change table with stairs and handrails enables children to be assisted onto the change table without being lifted.

Retractable, lockable, and easily accessible steps reduce the need for the worker to bend.

The change table is designed so the child's feet are facing the worker, reducing the need for the worker to twist. There is space under the change table so the worker can easily reach the child.

A Health and Safety Solution **Lifting children in/out of cots and highchairs or on/off change tables**

Further Information

WorkSafe Advisory Service

Toll-free 1800 136 089

Email info@worksafe.vic.gov.au

worksafe.vic.gov.au

Related WorkSafe Health and Safety Solutions

- *Working at low levels in children's services*
- *Moving equipment in children's services*
- *Storing supplies and equipment in children's services*
- *Using office areas*
- *Maintaining indoor and outdoor areas in children's services*

Related WorkSafe publications

- *Childcare – Designing change table steps for children, 2009*
- *Injury Hotspots – Children's services, 2008*

Other related publications

- *Children's Services Regulations, 2009*
(available from legislation.vic.gov.au)
- *Emergency Management Guidelines, 2010*
(available from education.vic.gov.au)

Australian Standards

- *AS/NZS 2130:1998, Cots for day nursery, hospital and institutional use – Safety requirements*

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