



# CRIB MATTRESS/NAP MAT HYGIENE

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN CRIB MATTRESS/NAP MAT HYGIENE?

Babies and young children's immune systems are much more susceptible to germs and illnesses than the immune systems of older children or adults. It is important to take precautions to ensure that the sleeping environments of babies and/or young children are as clean and healthy as possible, which includes keeping their crib mattress and nap mat clean. Young children typically sleep 12-15 hours per day. It is imperative that their mattress and bedding is kept free of harmful bacteria and mold.



## WHAT NEGATIVE HEALTH EFFECTS CAN RESULT FROM AN UNCLEAN CRIB MATTRESS/NAP MAT?

Certain so-called "breathable" crib mattresses or nap mats are not waterproof. The belief is that, without waterproofing, the baby can breathe through the surface and even into the interior of the mattress. The problem with these "breathable" designs is that hygiene is sacrificed, which can quickly become dangerous.

Urine, fecal messes, vomit and spilled milk can saturate a non-protected mattress or nap mat, which can lead to the growth of mold and mildew. In response to allergens, such as mold, a baby's airways can spasm, which can lead to a cough or difficulty breathing. The buildup of microbes can pose a potential threat to a young child's health. Excess dust and dust mites can lead to skin problems, such as eczema and skin irritation.



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## SHOULD YOU PURCHASE A WATERPROOF MATTRESS/NAP MAT?

A waterproof mattress (or mattress cover) or nap mat can help maintain the hygiene of a baby's sleep environment. It can prevent water, urine, fecal matter, milk or other liquids from being absorbed into the interior of the mattress/nap mat where bacteria and mold can grow and be breathed by the baby, and released into the air contributing to poor indoor air quality.

Air quality significantly impacts children's health. Health impacts associated with poor indoor air include: decreased lung size and function, asthma and even some types of cancer. Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution because their lungs are still developing and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. It is essential that there is a barrier which prevents water and other liquids from settling into a child's mattress or nap mat. Though a waterproof mattress (or mattress cover) and/or nap mat encourages proper hygiene, it is important that the mattress or nap mat is not made with harmful chemicals, such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) or perfluorinated chemicals.



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## WHAT IS THE PROPER WAY TO CLEAN A CRIB MATTRESS/NAP MAT?

- Mattresses and nap mats should be vacuumed on both sides to remove any dust or debris on the surface. Close attention should be given to seams or buttons, since these are areas where dust and other debris, such as crumbs, may develop and are harder to clean.
- Using warm water and detergent that is free of bleach, moisten the mattress/nap mat with a cloth; do not saturate the mattress/nap mat with water, as this increases the likelihood that mold will grow.
- If there are any areas with stains, a natural stain remover can be used to get them out. Some examples of natural stain removers include baking soda, lemon juice and vinegar.
- There are also stain removal products that avoid harsh chemicals. Look for fragrance-free products that are 3rd party certified and labeled by Green Seal, EcoLogo or EPA's Safer Choice (Fragrance-Free).
- It is best to let the mattress or nap mat air dry outside, as it speeds up the drying process and leaves less time for mold to begin to grow.

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