

baby:

PRIORITY NUMBER ONE



This solid maple crib, made by Pacific Rim Woodworking and sold by The Organic Mattress Store, has a finish of nontoxic tung oil and beeswax. A conversion kit can turn the crib into a youth bed. Photo courtesy of The Organic Mattress Store.



The Organic Mattress Store also offers organic cotton and wool mattresses and cotton comforters for babies. Photo courtesy of The Organic Mattress Store.



Baby's Breath, an air purifier sold on www.greenest.com, addresses the complete spectrum of air cleaning, removing submicron particles, noxious gases and chemicals. Photo courtesy of GreenNest.

When my son was little, I spent many sleepless nights and took a few trips to the hospital emergency room with him before learning that his childhood asthma was caused by allergies to dust, mold and animal dander.

It's a lesson I learned well. We want, above all else, to protect our children. Yet often we expose them to harm merely because we are uninformed of some health hazards, such as environmental pollutants in our homes.

This especially applies to home nurseries. Since babies breathe more frequently than adults and will inhale more pollutants in relation to their body weight, it is very important to keep nurseries free of all toxins and air pollutants.

Lisa Beres, a certified bau-biologist (see article in this issue about bau-biologie) who has written and lectured on creating healthy homes and nurseries, speaks of childhood health problems linked to poor air quality: ADD, ADHD, allergies, asthma, childhood brain cancer, leukemia and autism. The last three illnesses are linked to electromagnetic radiation (EMR) and pesticides. "Today we are a hundred million times more exposed to electromagnetic radiation than our grandparents were," says Beres.

Air quality

In addition to obvious toxins from paints, and even vinyl wallpaper, Beres says that cleaning products should be chemical free, with no chlorine bleach or ammonia. She also warns against using baby powder containing talcum, which is a known carcinogen similar to asbestos. An overuse of antibacterial soap prevents children from creating their own antibodies, according to Beres.

In a pet-loving family, animal dander may be harder to control as it can


come in on shoes. And it won't be long before your baby will begin to crawl. Area rugs that are washable and do not have foam padding are a good alternative to a hard surface throughout the room.

The nursery should be designed to flush out airborne contaminants and prevent excessive moisture in the air, which can facilitate the growth of allergenic mold, according to the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. A ceiling or window fan can move air through the nursery. Beres and her husband Ron recommend an additional solution. They are co-owners of an e-commerce website, www.GreenNest.com, where they offer products promoting healthy homes. Among these is an air purifying machine, Baby's Breath, which removes submicron particles, gases and chemicals.

Debra Lynn Dadd, another expert on creating healthy home environments, recommends not painting the nursery right before the baby goes into it. "Ideally, the painting should be done when the mother is three or four months pregnant, and the mother should not be the one doing the painting," she says.

The crib

Another item at GreenNest.com is a wool and cotton mattress, which has been certified as flame retardant. "Wool is a naturally flame retardant material," Beres points out. "The crib itself should not be a hand-me-down that might be finished with lead paint." The bedding should be organic cotton and/or wool.

A little planning before your baby's arrival will help him/her thrive in an environment that is as healthy as possible. 

As a guide, Beres has developed the following list of Eleven Steps to Creating a Healthy Nursery:

- (1) Avoid permanent press sheets or draperies, which can contain formaldehyde
- (2) Avoid use of particle board furniture, which can off-gas VOCs, such as formaldehyde
- (3) Use low or zero VOC paints and furniture finishes
- (4) Avoid soft plastic bottles and toys, such as soft teethingers, which can leach endocrine-disrupting chemicals
- (5) Avoid second-hand smoke in the house
- (6) Buy an all-natural, untreated crib mattress, with no chemical flame retardants
- (7) Use hard surface flooring instead of carpet, which can harbor millions of microorganisms
- (8) Limit the use of electronics in and around the crib, to avoid EMR. Keep a baby monitor as far away from the crib as you can while still being effective
- (9) Use nontoxic cleaning and personal care products
- (10) Avoid pesticides/antibacterial products
- (11) Use a chlorine filter for bathing water

RESOURCES

Lisa Beres,

www.GreenNest.com

Debra Lynn Dadd,

www.debraslist.com

The Organic Mattress Store,

www.theorganicmattressstore.com

By Anne Patterson