



Preventing Furniture and TV Tip-Overs

When you think about keeping your child safe, you may not consider the possibility of furniture or TVs tipping over on them.

Unfortunately, tip-over incidents happen more than many of us realize. They can cause serious injury and even death. In fact, a child is rushed to the emergency department at least once every single hour of every single day with injuries from a furniture or TV tip-over.

How furniture can be dangerous

Not surprisingly, 77% of all tip-over deaths from 2000 to 2019 involved kids under the age of six. Children this age are very curious and driven to explore. They're also too short to reach the tops of tall pieces of furniture where irresistible items like TVs, tablets, and toys may reside. All of this can translate to young children climbing furniture such as dressers, tables, chests, TV stands, and bookcases.



Tip-overs can also happen when furniture becomes unstable. This instability may be caused by factors like:

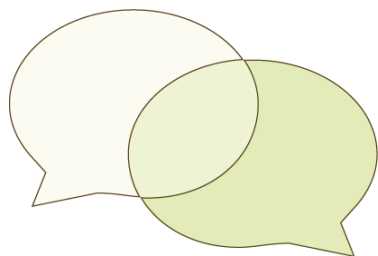
- Heavy objects in or on top of the furniture, such as appliances or TVs
- Multiple dresser drawers being open at the same time
- A furniture design that has a heavy top
- Placing the furniture on an unstable surface such as carpet

When a piece of furniture or appliance falls on a small child, it can crush or suffocate them under its weight. If it hits them in the head, they can end up with a serious brain injury. Tip-overs can also cause internal bleeding and broken bones.

You may be a parent who watches your child closely. However, **no parent can have eyes on their child every moment of the day. That's why it is critical to make your home environment as safe as possible.**

Of the fatal incidents involving children, about 50% happen in bedrooms, sometimes when parents think their kids are asleep.

You can't always stop your young child from climbing. But you can stabilize the furniture that could hurt them. Anti-tip devices cost \$5 to \$25 and take just minutes to install.



Parent to Parent

Keeping My Promise to Meggie

By Kimberly Amato

On December 17th, 2004, I kissed my 3-year-old twins goodnight. I was looking forward to baking Christmas cookies with them and their older brother in the morning. Instead, I woke that to my husband frantically screaming my name. My daughter, Meghan, was found under her dresser, and she wasn't breathing.

We didn't hear the dresser fall. She was unable to cry, her airway crushed by the weight of the dresser that fell on top of her while the rest of our family was asleep. I called 911 and began CPR, but it was too late.

As I held her lifeless body in the emergency room, I promised her she'd be the last child to ever die from a dresser tip-over. Unfortunately, she wasn't. Hundreds more have died this way since.



The more I learned about tip-overs, the more angry and determined I became to stop them. Furniture is not required to be tested for safety, which was shocking to me. There has been a safety standard for dressers and other "clothing storage units" for 20 years, but it's voluntary, weak and insufficient. Dressers that comply with the current standard, yet have injured and killed children, are still sold today.

You can't tell by looking at a piece of furniture whether or not it's likely to tip over. Meghan's dresser was small, heavy, and well-made piece. It took two adults to move. Kids may interact with a piece of furniture 100 times. Each time, the physics is different based on "real world" factors: how many drawers they pull out or doors they open, what's in the drawers or on the shelves, what surface the furniture is on, whether they climb it and how high, how much the child weighs...the list goes on.

We need mandatory safety and stability standards that require testing by manufacturers for these real-world situations. That's the goal of the Stop Tip-overs of Unstable Risky Dressers on Youth (STURDY) Act (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/441/text>). You can urge your Senators (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members>) to support The STURDY Act, using this quick form (<https://act.consumerreports.org/mibjUUj>) to send a letter. But, for now, it is up to parents and caregivers to take the final steps to reduce the risk of a tip-over.

Help me keep my promise to Meggie. Start by realizing that a furniture or TV tip-over CAN happen to your family. No one who has ever lost a child to a tip-over, or any other preventable "accident," ever thought it would happen to them. Also know that you can be in the same room and be powerless to stop a tip-over. While many tip-overs happen when children are in a room alone, they also happen with an adult in the room with them. It only takes one time, and it happens in an instant.

Please, anchor all your furniture to the walls. If you rent and putting holes in the walls violates your rental agreement, talk to the landlord and explain the importance of childproofing, including anchoring furniture and TVs to prevent injury or death to your child. Share the information here with them!

Holes in furniture and in walls can be fixed. The hole in my broken heart will never, ever go away.

Kimberly Amato is founder of Meghan's Hope (<http://www.meghanshope.org/>), an organization created to raise awareness about little known safety hazards in the home (follow it on Facebook here (<https://www.facebook.com/meghanshope>)). She is also a founding member of Parents Against Tip-Overs (<http://www.stoptipovers.org/>). This article is adapted from Meghan's Story (<http://www.meghanshope.org/meghans-story.html>).

How to prevent tip-overs

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- Secure all furniture and mirrors with anti-tip devices. This may require relocating the furniture so the wall anchors can be placed in a stud.
- Consider using furniture and wall anchors that are metal (such as "L" brackets). Plastic can become brittle over time and break, causing anchors to fail. Counterfeit/knock off anchors are becoming a problem on some online sites. Use known brand name products, even if they are a little more expensive.
- The heavier the furniture, the more anchors you should use to prevent it from tipping. A resource list of recommended anchors can be found at here. (<http://www.meghanshope.org/>)
- In dressers and other clothing-storage furniture, place heavier objects on the lowest shelves/drawers and lighter objects in higher ones.
- Avoid putting items like toys, electronics, and remotes in high places, no matter where it is. This can tempt kids to climb.
- Install dresser drawer stops or safety straps so your child can't pull drawers out all the way. Use the kind that attach on the outside of the drawer and side of a dresser, or magnet locks. Remember to store the magnet key in a safe place out of sight and reach of the child.
- Never place a TV on top of a dresser, especially in a child's room or playroom. If you have an old tube style TV and replace it with a flat screen. Recycle it rather than give it away or put it elsewhere in your home.
- Mount flat-screen TVs to the wall or to furniture. Use anti-tip devices for TVs that aren't wall mounted. Flat screen TVs can still injure or kill a child. Even though they seem light, they weigh as much as one or two bowling balls! You wouldn't want a bowling ball to fall on your child's head, so be sure to anchor even flat screen TV's.
- Check online (<https://www.anchorit.gov/how-to-anchor-it/parents-and-caregivers/>) for videos and articles if you need help installing anti-tip devices. Visit www.anchorit.gov (<http://www.anchorit.gov/>) to learn more about anchoring furniture and TV's.

Remember

If your child has had furniture fall on them, be sure to take them to see their pediatrician or to the emergency room right away. Even if they seem fine, there could be internal bleeding or damage to their organs.

It's also important to report tip-overs to the Consumer Product Safety Commission at www.saferproducts.gov, even if there was no injury, as it could prevent another child from being injured or killed by the same type of furniture.

More Information

- Childproofing Your Home for Poisons (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Childproofing-Your-Home.aspx>)
- Childproofing Tips for Grandparents (</English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/A-Message-for-Grandparents-Keeping-Your-Grandchild-Safe-in-Your-Home.aspx>)
- Anchor It! (<https://www.anchorit.gov/>) — A national public education campaign by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to prevent furniture and TV tip-overs.
- Even While You're Watching (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0kzkFd1wTqI>) (CPSC)

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