

What you need to know about securing furniture to the wall to prevent a deadly tip-over

By Kimberly Amato, Vice Chair, Parents Against Tip-Overs

When my daughter Meghan died from a dresser tip-over in 2004, furniture anchors were not sold in stores along with other childproofing supplies, even though they existed. Both the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the furniture industry were also well-aware furniture and TV tip-overs were injuring tens of thousands of children every year and several had even died before her, yet they did nothing to alert consumers and the public to the danger and my Meggie and hundreds of other children since have died as a result.

There is a new mandatory safety and stability standard coming soon, thanks to a new law called the STURDY Act, but there are millions of pieces of furniture in homes right now, including yours, that could injure or even kill a child you love.

The good news is there is something quick and easy you can do to protect your child from this danger hidden in plain sight in your home today! Securing your furniture and TVs to the wall is a relatively quick and easy task that can quite literally save a life.

How often do tip-overs really happen?

According to the [CPSC's most recent Tip-Over report](#), 53 people a day, mostly children, are injured when a piece of furniture, TV, or appliance falls on them. About every 2 weeks a child dies because of a tip-over. Since 2000, 592 people have lost their lives due to tip-overs and nearly 20,000 people are injured every year!

It's a common misconception that only tall, heavy, or "cheap" furniture needs to be anchored to the wall. The reality is any piece of furniture has the potential to become unstable and tip-over, sometimes just by opening more than one drawer!

Most often, the forces created when a child, or even an adult, pushes on a drawer, pulls on an open drawer, or attempts to climb in or on the furniture causes it to become unstable and tip. It doesn't have to be a lot of force! It also happens faster than you can say "it won't happen to me". You can be in the same room and be powerless to stop it. Take a moment to watch [this PSA from the CPSC](#) to see how fast it happens.

What needs to be anchored to the wall?

- Dressers and other furniture with drawers such as larger nightstands, filing cabinets, etc.
- Wardrobes and storage cabinets with doors and/or drawers
- Shelving units like bookcases and cube-style storage units
- Televisions, both "tube" and flat screens. They can be anchored to the wall or to the furniture on which it sits (and that furniture should also be anchored to the wall)

Important things to know when shopping for a furniture anchor:

- Avoid furniture anchors/restraints that have zip ties. They can easily become brittle and break, sometimes before they are even installed!
- The anchors that come with furniture may not be the best anchor to use! They are not tested to withstand the forces involved in tip-overs at this time, nor are they standardized.
- Stick to trusted brand names you know that sell other childproofing devices over “copycat” style anchors that might cost less but are also likely made from inferior materials that are more likely to fail to prevent a tip-over.
- If you can, select anchoring devices that are made from high-grade metal components such as the [Hangman anti-tip kit](#) or [Quakehold furniture cable](#), or even simple “L” brackets you can get at any hardware or home improvement store. Thin metal “luggage tag” style cables are not recommended as they are likely to fail at the connection point where the cable attaches to itself.
- Be wary of products that you don’t require you to screw the wall portion of the anchor into a stud or the furniture.
- Be wary of tip-over devices with adhesives, as they may not be as strong, don’t adequately stick to some surfaces, and may also be more likely to fail to prevent a tip-over from happening.

Once you’ve selected a device, it’s extremely important that it is properly installed to ensure it does the job it is intended to do. Improper installation can lead to a false sense of security and potential failure of the anchor to prevent a tip-over from happening.

Tips for installing furniture and TV anti-tip devices and anchors

- You can find valuable information and DIY videos at www.anchorit.gov and [consumer reports](#)
- Install the furniture side of the device into solid wood, not the thin particle board or MDF, as those materials are not strong enough to hold the screws and can pull right out of the furniture.
- Install the wall side of the device into a wood stud. This may require you to move the furniture slightly to access a stud to screw the device into. A stud finder device will help you easily locate the studs (borrow one from a friend if you don’t have one).
- If you don’t have wood studs, use drywall anchors or bolts specifically designed for the material for your walls (available at home improvement and hardware stores).
- Not sure how to do it or don’t have the right tools? Ask a friend or neighbor who does to help or hire a handyman or a [professional childproofers](#) to do it for you.

What else should I know?

Right now, *there are no mandatory testing standards for anti-tip-over devices*, and they are not all created equal. It’s also important to realize that not all components are the same, either. For example, there are several different grades and strengths of plastic, metals, and nylon straps and some are stronger than others, but you can’t tell by looking at them. You also can’t necessarily trust all the

reviews you read on mass-selling websites. Spending a few more dollars for trusted brands and high-quality anti-tip devices is well worth it when we are talking about child safety.

Had I known then what I know now, I would have taken the 20 minutes and \$10 it would have cost to secure Meggie's dresser to the wall, and she'd still be here with us. Please, listen to Meggie, and anchor your furniture and TVs today.