FRAGILE

Transport Safely

CHILD SAFETY SEAT RECOMMENDATIONS

REAR-FACING SEATS from birth until age 2, or until your child reaches the upper weight limit of their rear-facing convertible seat, which will be around 30–45 pounds.

FORWARD-FACING SEATS once your child reaches the upper weight or height limit of their rear-facing convertible seat. It is safest to keep your child in a forward-facing seat with a harness until they reach the maximum weight limit (40–65+ pounds) or height restriction of their seat.

BELT-POSITIONING BOOSTER SEATS once a child outgrows the upper weight or height limit of their forward-facing harness. Children should use belt-positioning booster seats until they are at least 4'9" and are between 8 and 12 years of age.

LAP & SHOULDER BELTS once the belt fits properly. All children under age 13 should ride in the back seat!

INSTALL THE SAFETY SEAT CORRECTLY

Car seats are most effective when used properly. Make sure you read the installation instructions carefully. There are certified child safety seat technicians who can help. Contact 1-866-SEAT-CHECK or visit www.seatcheck.org for additional information.

WHY ARE CHILD SAFETY SEATS NEEDED?

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death and injury for all children. Child restraints reduce the risk of injury by 71% to 82% and reduce the risk of death by 28% in comparison to children in seat belts alone. Booster seats reduce the risk of nonfatal injuries by 45% among 4 to 8 year olds. All 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia have mandatory child safety seat laws in place to protect children.

All vehicle occupants need to be properly restrained by seat belts or child safety seats to prevent injury in case of a sudden stop, swerve or crash. Seat belts and child safety seats are designed to keep people in the vehicle, contact the strongest parts of the body, spread crash forces over a wide area of the body, help the body slow down and protect the brain and spinal cord. An unrestrained occupant can be thrown around the vehicle like a flying missile. In a 30 mph crash, a person can be thrown with a force equal to 30 times their own weight (10-pound infant x 30 mph = 300 lbs. of force). An unrestrained child could crash with a force comparable to falling from a three-story building!

Many people believe they can protect children while riding in a vehicle by holding them on their laps, but safety experts call this the "child crusher" position. Actually, a parent or other adult increases both the chances and severity of injury to a child in a crash with this practice. Even at low speeds, the forces generated in a crash are so great that even strong adults cannot restrain or shield children held in their laps. The child can be thrown forward into the dashboard or seat back area and then crushed between that surface and the body of the adult (restrained or unrestrained).

Young passengers are at the highest risk for serious head and spinal injuries because they have large heads, less developed neck muscles and spines. Remember, children are not small adults! Under similar situations, a young child is much more likely to be injured than an adult. Each year about 400 passengers under age five are killed and tens of thousands are injured as a result of vehicle crashes and sudden stops.

The best safety seat is one that:

1. Fits your child;
2. Fits your vehicle;
3. And you will use correctly every trip!

EXPECTANT MOTHERS:

- Always wear a lap and shoulder belt
- Place the lap belt below or under the belly
- Position the shoulder belt across the chest and to the side of the belly
- Sit at least 10 inches away from the steering wheel
- Limit driving during the last three months when the steering wheel is close to the abdomen

SAFETY IN AND AROUND THE VEHICLE:

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Children's bodies heat up 3–5 times faster than adults and climb to dangerous levels in minutes. Set-up reminders:
  - Place your purse or briefcase in the back seat
  - Use a stuffed doll as a placeholder. When your child is in their car seat, put the doll in the front seat.
  - Have the daycare call both parents if the expected child does not arrive within a set time period
- Use child safety locks on doors and windows to keep children safe.
- Teach children to never play in or around parked cars.
  - Walk around and behind your vehicle before moving it
- Teach your children to not play with unused seat belts. Seat belt entanglement can occur when a child inadvertently engages the automatic locking mode of a switchable retractor and wraps the belt around a part of their body.
  - If necessary, buckle unused seat belts when using LATCH.

Important Things to Consider

- Buckle up every trip, every time.
- Carefully read the child safety seat manufacturer's instructions and the vehicle owner's manual for installation instructions and warnings.
- Make sure to register your child safety seat via mail, online or by phone to be notified of any potential safety recalls.
- Be sure all harness straps are properly threaded and are not twisted.
- **All children under age 13 should ride in the back seat.**
- Infants and toddlers should ride rear-facing as long as possible until age two or until they reach the upper weight limit of their rear-facing convertible seat. When an infant rides rear-facing the shell of the car seat absorbs much of the crash forces and protects their head, neck and spine. **Never place a rear-facing child in the front seat with an active passenger frontal air bag!**
- Once your child has outgrown the rear-facing seat, it is safest for them to ride forward-facing until they reach the upper weight limit (40–65+ pounds) or height limit of the seat.
- When a child has outgrown their harness, they are not yet ready for an adult safety belt. They should use a booster seat until they are at least 4'9", usually between 8 to 12 years of age.
- Your child is ready for the vehicle seat belt when the lap and shoulder belt fit them properly by conducting the seat belt fit test. This is usually around 4'9".
- **Never place the shoulder belt under your child's arm or behind his/her back. (see page 7 for the safety belt fit test).**
- Buckle unused safety belts when installing your child safety seat with the LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for CHildren) system to prevent risk of strangulation.
- Always check around cars to make sure children are not playing near your vehicle before backing or driving forward.
- On long car trips, always stop and take infants out of their infant carrier every hour and a half to two hours to keep their airway open.
- No more than one person should be placed in a safety belt system — regardless of age.

ROAD SAFETY IS NO ACCIDENT. WHAT TYPES OF CHILD SEATS ARE AVAILABLE?

Infant-only seats

Infant-only seats are designed for smaller infants for use up to 22–30 or more pounds. For proper fit, the infant's head should not be closer than one inch from the top of the car seat shell. Infant-only seats are installed to face the rear of the vehicle only and are secured by either the vehicle seat belt or the LATCH system. **Never use the seat belt and LATCH system together at the same time!** Toddlers should ride rear-facing until age two, or until they reach the upper weight limit of the rear-facing convertible seat, between 30–45 pounds. Remember, never install a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with activated air bags.

REAR-FACING

- Harness straps must be at or below the shoulders for rear-facing children, refer to the owner's manual for directions.
- The retainer clip should be positioned at armpit level.
- The harness must be snug so you cannot pinch any webbing at the shoulders.
- Only use infant inserts and padding that came with the car seat in the box, never add anything additional.
- In cold weather, dress children in lightweight clothing, secure the harness then place a blanket or jacket over the harness.

FORWARD-FACING

- Harness straps should be at or above the shoulders for all forward-facing children, refer to manufacturer's instructions.
- The retainer clip should be positioned at armpit level.
- The harness must be snug so you cannot pinch any webbing at the shoulders.
- Read the car seat instruction manual to determine the correct seat belt path for installation.

Convertible seats

These seats are designed for infants and toddlers. They can be used in the rear-facing position between 30 to 45 pounds and in the forward-facing position. Always read the car seat manufacturer's instructions and labels for the maximum weight and height limits for the rear-facing and forward-facing positions.

Combination seats

Combination seats are used forward-facing only and become a booster seat once the child reaches the maximum weight or height allowed for the harness. Harness weight limits vary between 40 to 90 pounds and booster seat weight limits go up to 100 or more pounds. Combination seats are more likely to have a taller shell and higher harness slot positions than convertible car seats so older children can remain in a harness longer than their convertible car seat. The harness can be removed once the child reaches the height or weight limit of the harness and the seat becomes a belt-positioning booster seat.

Belt-Positioning Boosters

Belt-positioning booster seats are for children who have reached the top weight and height limit of their forward-facing harness but are shorter than 4'9". Booster seats elevate children so the vehicle lap and shoulder belt fits them properly. Most children do not reach 4'9" until they are between 8 to 12 years of age.

All booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. Backless boosters should only be used in vehicles that have a headrest for support. For vehicles that have no headrest, a high-back booster should be used to provide appropriate head support and even side impact protection. Ask your child to buckle their booster seat in when they get out of it. This will prevent the unoccupied booster seat from becoming a projectile in a collision.

Vehicle Seat Belt

Your child is ready to move into the vehicle seat belt when the adult lap and shoulder belt fits them properly. This is usually around 4'9" and between 8 to 12 years of age. Never allow your child to place the shoulder strap under their arm or behind their back. If they do, they may not be ready to sit in the vehicle seat belt. Have your child take the following seat belt fit test to determine if they are ready to use the vehicle seat belt:

1. In the back seat, have your child sit all the way against the back of the vehicle seat. *Do their knees bend at the edge of the seat?* If so, go on. If not, they should continue to use a booster seat.

2. Buckle the seat belt. *Does the lap belt stay low and snug on their hips?* If so, go on. If it rests on the soft part of the stomach, your child should continue to use a booster seat.

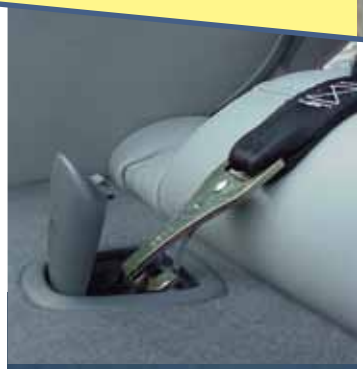
3. Look at the shoulder belt. *Does it rest on the collarbone in the middle of the shoulder?* If yes, go on. If it is on the face or neck, your child still needs a booster seat.

4. *Can your child maintain the correct seating position with the shoulder belt on their shoulder and the lap belt low across their hips throughout the entire trip?* If so, your child has passed the Safety Belt Fit Test. If not, they should use a belt-positioning booster seat.

COMMON MISTAKES PARENTS MAKE:

- Not using a child safety seat or booster seat when needed
- Harness twisted, loose or at improper height
- The car seat moves more than 1 inch front-to-back and side-to-side at the belt path
- Not using the top tether for forward-facing seats
- Retainer clip (chest clip) not at armpit level

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO INSTALL A CHILD SAFETY SEAT PROPERLY?



Buying the correct child safety seat won't protect your child properly if you don't install it correctly. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, approximately **3 out of every 4** child safety seats are not used correctly. **Read the child safety seat manufacturer's instructions and the vehicle owner's manuals before you install the seat in your vehicle.**

All child safety seats **must** be properly secured in the vehicle using either the vehicle's seat belt or LATCH system to ensure safe performance in a crash or sudden stop. Both LATCH and the seat belts offer the same protection and should never be used at the same time. Make sure not to over-tighten the seat because this can cause damage to the child safety seat or vehicle. When testing for tightness there should be no more than one inch of side-to-side or forward movement at the belt path. It is important to read the car seat manual to identify the correct path to use with the seat belt or LATCH system.

Many passenger vehicles made after 1995 have "switchable retractor" systems. The retractor can be switched from an "emergency locking retractor" (ELR) system to an "automatic locking retractor" (ALR) system designed to secure a child safety seat. Refer to the "safety restraint" section of your vehicle owner's manual for details. Additionally, most vehicles made after September 2002, have at least three top tether anchors and two sets of lower anchors. The use of lower anchors in the rear center seating position is rare so it is important to consult your vehicle owner's manual to determine if it is permissible. If not, you must use the seat belt in that seating position.

There are other types of seat belt systems that require special installation procedures to hold safety seats secure.

HOW DO YOU PROPERLY SECURE YOUR CHILD IN THE SEAT?

After securing the child safety seat to the vehicle, it is equally important to properly secure your child in the seat. The retainer clip must be placed at armpit level on your child's body. The harness straps should be flat, not twisted, and adjusted so they are snug and you are unable to pinch any slack near their shoulder.

CAN I USE MY CHILD SAFETY SEAT WHEN FLYING?

It is a good idea to determine an airline carrier's policy regarding the use of child safety seats or other requirements such as seat location or the purchase of an additional ticket when booking the flight. Be sure to check your child restraint for an FAA certification label indicating that it is safe to use for air travel.

SHOULD YOU BUY A USED CHILD SAFETY SEAT?

If you must use a second-hand child safety seat, make sure you can **answer yes to all of the following questions:**

- **Has the car seat expired or been recalled?** Car seats can only be used for 6 years unless a longer date is allowed by the seat manufacturer. Child seat manufacturers provide the date of manufacture or expiration date on the seat or label as a guide for how long the seat can be used. Further expiration information can be found in the instruction manual. To identify if the car seat is under recall, use the manufacturer's label to obtain the model name, model number and date of manufacture. Then visit www.NHTSA.gov or call the NHTSA Hotline at (800) 424-9393.

WHAT TO DO WITH EXPIRED CAR SEATS:

- Destroy the car seat by completely dismantling it
- Cut the harness straps and fabric
- Break up the foam
- Discard the car seat shell and components on different collection days to avoid someone from re-assembling the car seat
- Ask your local recycle center if parts can be recycled

- **Is the manufacturer's instruction booklet available for you to consult?** Read the information carefully so you can be sure you have all the necessary parts and can install the seat properly.
- **Was the seat well maintained?**
- **Are the harness straps free of fraying and discoloration?** Sunlight is a leading case of deterioration.
- **Is the webbing completely free of any signs of wear in places where it passes over the slots?**
- **Do the buckles operate properly?**
- **Are all the necessary parts included?** If the installation requires a tether strap or locking clip, are they readily available?
- **Is the child seat free of cracks, bends, loose bolts, etc.?**
- **It was never involved in a moderate to severe crash.**

HOW DO YOU SELECT THE BEST SAFETY SEAT FOR YOUR CHILD?

When buying a safety seat, remember to select one that is appropriate for your child, fits your vehicle and you will use correctly every time you transport your child. You can visit www.NHTSA.gov to access their ease of use rating system on car seats, this will help you find seats that have convenience factors, safety features and simple instructions to follow.

Do not base your selection of a child safety seat solely on price. All child safety seats must meet the same federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Try installing the seat in your vehicle to be certain that it fits and can be tightly secured. Most stores will allow you to examine different models prior to buying a seat. Use this opportunity to identify the seat that best fits your child.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY PLEASE CONTACT:

- AAA
  AAA.com/carseat
- Find a technician to help you correctly install your child safety seat — visit **www.seatcheck.org** or call 1-866-SEAT-CHECK.
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety
  www.aaafoundation.org
- National Child Passenger Safety Board
  www.cpsboard.org
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
  www.nhtsa.gov

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