

CAR SEAT SAFETY

Each year thousands of young children are killed or injured in car crashes. You can help prevent this from happening by always using car safety seats and seat belts correctly.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), no one seat is the “best” or “safest.” The best seat is the one that fits your child’s size, is correctly installed and is used properly every time you drive. Keep the following in mind:

» Don’t base your decision on price alone. Higher prices can mean added features that may or may not make the seat safer or easier to use. All car safety seats available for purchase in the United States must meet strict safety guidelines established and maintained by the federal government.



» When you find a seat you like, try it out. Put your child in it and adjust the harnesses and buckles. Make sure it fits properly and securely in your car. Keep in mind pictures or displays of car safety seats may not show them being used the right way.

» All infants should ride rear-facing until they reach at least 1 year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. That means if your baby reaches 20 pounds before his/her 1st birthday, he/she should still remain rear-facing until age 1.

- » Once your child is at least 1 and at least 20 pounds, he/she can ride forward-facing. It is best for him/her to ride rear-facing until he/she reaches the highest weight or height limit allowed by the car safety seat. Many types of seats are available that can be used forward-facing including convertible seats, built-in seats, combination forward-facing/booster seats and travel vests.
- » Children ages 4 to 8 between 40 and 80 pounds should ride in booster seats restrained with lap and shoulder belts.

Important Safety Rules

- » Always use a car safety seat. You should start with your baby’s first ride home from the hospital.
- » Never place a child in a rear-facing car safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag.
- » The safest place for all children to ride is the back seat.
- » Set a good example – always wear your seat belt.
- » Remember that each car safety seat is different. Read and keep the instructions that came with your seat handy, and follow the manufacturer’s instructions at all times.
- » Read the owner’s manual that came with your car. It will tell you how to properly install car safety seats in your particular vehicle.
- » To check proper installation of a car seat, contact a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician. To locate and set up an appointment, call toll-free 866-SEATCHECK (866-732-8243) or visit www.seatcheck.org, www.buckleupnc.org and www.usa.safekids.org.

For more information on the AAP’s car seat safety guidelines and recommendations, visit www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm.

For ratings and recall information, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov or call 1-888-327-4236.