

# CAR SEAT SAFETY

You want your children to be safe and sound as you drive from here to there each day. What you may not know is that every year thousands of children are injured or killed in car crashes. Many of these deaths and injuries could have been avoided if children were properly secured in their car seats or seat belts. You can make a difference for your children by using their car seats or seat belts properly every time they ride in your car.

## How To Choose And Use

Choose a seat belt that fits your child's weight and size. Try it out in the store before you take it home. Place your child in the seat and adjust the straps and buckles to make sure it works for your child. Fit it properly and securely in your car. Assure the seat is buckled tightly into your vehicle and your child is buckled snugly into the seat. For the best protection for your child, keep them in the youngest available car seat up to the manufacturer's height or weight limit.

**Rear-facing Seats** – Infants should ride rear-facing until they have reached a minimum of 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds. If your baby reaches 20 pounds before his first birthday, he should remain rear-facing until he turns 1 year old. Check your car safety seat instructions to find the weight and height limits for rear-facing seats. Some types allow up to the weight of 30 pounds.

**Forward-facing Seats** – Children who are at least 1 year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds can ride in a forward-facing seats. Check your car safety seat instructions to find the weight and height limits for forward-facing seats. Some types allow up to the age of 4 and weight of 40 pounds.

**Booster Seats** – Children can ride in a booster seat usually beginning at age 4 and weight of 40 pounds. Booster seats are designed to raise your child so that the lap and shoulder seat belts fit properly. The lap belt should like low across a child's upper thighs and the shoulder belt should cross the middle of a child's chest and shoulder.

**Seat Belts** – Children usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall can use a seat belt in the car. The seat belt should fit properly with the lap belt lying across the child's upper thighs and the shoulder belt across the chest. Seat belts are designed for adults. If it does not fit your child correctly, she should stay in a booster seat until the seat belt fits her properly. This is usually when the child reaches about 4'9" in height and is between 8 and 12 years of age. Also, ensure your child does not tuck the shoulder belt behind her back or under her arm.

## Tips To Remember

There are many types of seats that can be used. When making changes always follow the car seat instructions. Follow the instructions of your car owner's manual to properly install your child's car seat. Always wear your own seat belt as a good role model. Never allow anyone to share car seats or seat belts. The safest place for children under the age of 13 is in the back seat.

All of the above information was gathered from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Website at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) Website at [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov). If you want more information such as safely securing children with special needs, premature infants, using used car seats or airplane safety tips go to these sites. If you need help installing your child's car seat, contact a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician. To locate a car seat inspection station and set up an appointment, call toll-free at 866/SEATCHECK (866/732-8243) or visit [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org).