

Car Seat Safety for Children

Car crashes are the leading cause of death in children 4 years of age and older. Riding in a car seat can protect your child from death or injury. In 2018, the American Academy of Pediatrics updated its recommendations to help protect children better. In this handout, you will learn which car seat your child should use. You will also learn how to install and use that car seat.

TYPES OF CAR SEATS

- ❖ See table on page two for car seat recommendations by age

Rear-facing only infant seats

- Only used rear-facing for infants
- Smaller and lighter
- Usually have a base that installs with a seat that clicks in and out and stays in the car

Convertible seats

- Can be used rear-facing for infants and toddlers
- Can be used forward-facing for older children
- Larger and bulkier than infant seats
- Stay in the car, and the child is lifted in and out

3-in-1 seats

- Can be used rear-facing, forward-facing, or as a booster seat

Combination seats

- Can only be used forward-facing
- Can be used with a harness or as a booster seat

Booster seats

- Only used forward facing for older children
- Some have a high-back while others are backless
- Use with the car's seat belt

CAR SEAT FAQs

How tight should the harness be?

- Tighten the straps so you cannot pinch extra fabric or slide your fist under the straps.
- Position the shoulder clip at your child's armpits.

What should my child wear in a car seat?

- Dress your child in light layers. Do not put him/her in a car seat in a heavy jacket or snowsuit.
- Do not use extra positioners or pillows in the car seat.

Can I use a used car seat?

- Only use a used car seat if you know it has not been in a crash, is not expired and has all the parts.

Do I need a new car seat after a crash?

- Yes, if:
 - The car was damaged
 - Anyone was hurt
 - The airbags went off
 - The car seat looks damaged





Which car seat is best?

- The best car seat is one that fits your child, fits your car, and you will use every time.
- All car seats in the US have been tested to make sure they are safe.

Should I use a car seat on an airplane or taxi?

- You should always use a car seat in a taxi, ride share or other car transportation.
- Most car seats are approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to use on an airplane.

CAR SEAT RECOMMENDATIONS BY AGE

| Age | Recommended Car Seat | Things to Know |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Infant</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infant seat or convertible seat • Rear-facing in the back seat | <p>Tips for rear-facing car seats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An infant should always be supervised when sleeping in a car seat. • Do not have your child sleep in a car seat overnight. • Do not use extra positioners or pillows in the car seat. • Position shoulder straps at or below your child’s shoulders. • Make sure the car seat is at the right angle. Check the instructions and adjust if needed. • Never use a rear-facing car seat in the front seat or in a seat with an airbag. • Rear-facing car seats are safe even if your child’s legs are bent or touching the vehicle seat. |
| <p>Toddler to preschool</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convertible or 3-in-1 car seat • The new 2018 AAP recommendation is that children should ride in a rear-facing car seat as long as possible, up to the height and weight limits of their specific car seat. This includes almost all children under 2 years of age and most children up to age 4. • When children outgrow rear-facing limits on their seat, they should ride in a forward-facing car seat up to that seat’s weight and length limits. | |
| <p>School-age children</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-in-1 or combination seat • All children should ride in a forward-facing car seat in the back seat as long as possible, until they outgrow the maximum height or weight requirements of that seat. • After outgrowing a car seat, use a booster seat until children are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall (usually about 10-11 years old). | <p>Tips for forward-facing car seats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position shoulder straps at or above your child’s shoulders. • Children outgrow a forward-facing seat when they reach the maximum weight, their shoulders are above the top harness slots or their ears are above the top of the seat. • Set a good example for your child by having everyone in the car wear a seat belt. |
| <p>Older children and teens</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booster seat or seat belt • Use a booster seat until children are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall. Based on this, most children will ride in a booster seat until 10-11 years of age. • Children over 4 feet 9 inches tall should use both the lap and shoulder seat belt. • All children under 13 years old should ride in the back seat only. | |

HOW TO INSTALL A CAR SEAT

All car seats install differently. Read the manual that comes with your car seat to make sure you install it correctly.

General tips

- Car seats can be installed with the seat belt or with **LATCH** (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children). LATCH is a set of straps that attach to the car, and can be used instead of seat belts. Do not use LATCH and seat belts at the same time.
- Make sure the car seat is as tight as possible. When installed correctly, it should not move more than 1 inch side-to-side or front-to-back.
- Get your car seat inspected to make sure it is installed correctly. The websites below can help you find places to have the car seat inspected:
 - www.mass.gov/car-seat-safety
 - <https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats#install-inspection>
 - https://www.safekids.org/events/field_type/check-event