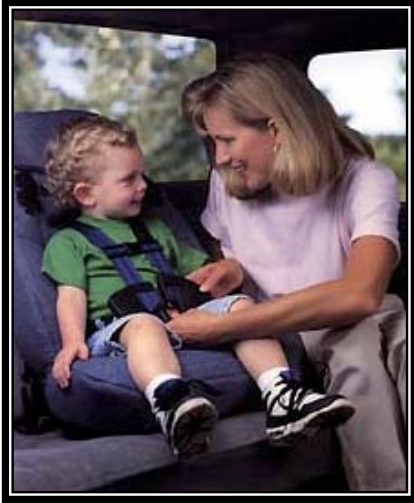


INFANT AND CHILD CAR SAFETY



Infants and children should always ride in child safety seats that meet standards established by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation. All child safety seats currently on the market must meet these standards. Look for a label stating that the seat complies with FMVSS 213, which stands for Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard #213.

Infants should ride in a safety seat facing the rear of the vehicle, preferably in the back seat, until they are at least 20 pounds and one year of age. Never place a rear-facing safety seat in front of an airbag.

Children weighing from 20 to 40 lbs. and who are more than one year of age can ride facing forward in a convertible seat.

Children weighing more than 40 lbs. should ride in a booster seat. Many booster seats are now designed for children weighing up to 80 pounds; check the product information on particular seats for specifics.

A safety seat must be correctly adjusted and installed. Visit the NHTSA Web site for more information about child passenger safety including how to correctly install child safety seats. Or, call the NHTSA Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.

DOES YOUR CHILD RIDE IN THE BACK SEAT?

The back seat is generally the safest place in a crash. If your vehicle has a passenger air bag, it is essential for children 12 and under to ride in back.

DOES YOUR CHILD RIDE FACING THE RIGHT WAY?

Infants should ride in rear facing restraints, preferably in the back seat, until about age 1 and at least 20-22 lbs.

- (A). Infants who weigh 20 lbs. before 1 year of age should ride in a restraint approved for higher rear facing weights
- (B). Always read your child restraint owner manual for instructions on properly using the restraint.
- (C). Children over age one and at least 20 pounds may ride facing forward.

- (D). Children are required by law to ride in a car seat until they are six years of age or weigh 60 pounds. For example, if your child weighs 35 pounds and is 5 years of age, they must still ride in a car seat.

DOES THE SAFETY BELT HOLD THE SEAT TIGHTLY IN PLACE?

Put the belt through the right slot. If your safety seat can be used facing either way, use the correct belt slots for each direction. The safety belt must stay tight when securing the safety seat. Check the vehicle owner's manual for tips on using the safety belts. Safety seat should not move more than one inch side to side.

IS THE HARNESS BUCKLED SNUGLY AROUND YOUR CHILD?

Keep the straps over your child's shoulder. The harness should be adjusted so you can slip only one finger underneath the straps at your child's chest. Place the chest clip at armpit level.

DOES YOUR CHILD OVER 40 POUNDS HAVE THE BEST PROTECTION POSSIBLE?

Keep your child in a safety seat with a full harness as long as possible, at least until 40 pounds. Then use a belt-positioning booster seat that helps the adult lap and shoulder belt fit better. A belt-positioning booster seat is preferred for children between 40-80 pounds. It is used with the adult lap and shoulder belt. Check on special products for heavy children too active to sit still in a booster.

HOW SHOULD A SAFETY BELT FIT AN OLDER CHILD?

The child must be tall enough to sit without slouching, with knees bent at the edge of the seat, with feet on the floor. The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the shoulder and across the chest. Never put the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the child's back. The adult lap and shoulder belt system alone will not fit most children until they are at least 4'9" tall and weigh about 80 pounds.

WHEN CHOOSING A SAFETY SEAT, REMEMBER:

A seat that is easy to install and use will be the best for you and your child. Find and read the instruction booklet.

Look for a convertible seat that has a higher weight limit in the rear-facing position if your baby is less than 1 year and over 20 lbs.

Try locking and releasing the buckle in the store. Try changing the length of the straps. Some harnesses adjust automatically to fit the child. Many can be adjusted easily from the front or the side. Others have a metal adjustment slide through which you must pull the straps. If the seat has a metal slide adjuster, you must thread the strap up and down through the openings, then back through the first slot to "lock" it every time you adjust the harness. This keeps the strap from pulling through the slide in a crash, which would allow the child to be thrown out. Try the seat in your vehicle. Most safety seats fit better into some vehicles than others. Cars with bucket seats or small rear seats may present problems.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR NEW BABY IN THE CAR

Everybody would be safest facing backward while riding in a car. Babies are lucky to have seats that work this way. Infants are safest when riding facing the rear, because the back of the safety seat supports the child's back, neck, and head in a crash. So, whichever seat you choose, your baby should ride rear-facing until about one year of age and at least 20 pounds. Two kinds of safety seats are made for babies:

1. Small, lightweight "infant-only" safety seats are designed for use rear-facing only. This kind can be used only as long as the baby's head is enclosed by the top rim of the seat. The label on the seat gives the upper weight limit (17 to 22 pounds). One seat can be converted into a car bed for babies who must lie flat.
2. Larger "convertible" seats usually fit children from birth to about 40 pounds. Some new models have weight limits as high as 30 to 32 pounds for rear-facing use. These products are especially good for babies under age one who are growing more rapidly than average. It may be turned around to face the front when the baby is about one year old and at least 20 pounds. How to choose the best seat for your baby. The simplest and least expensive model usually will work as well as one with fancy features.

Choose a seat that you find easy to use and that fits in your vehicle. Before you buy a seat, try it in your car to make sure it fits and can be buckled in tightly. If you choose a convertible seat, try it facing both rearward and forward. Look for the seat you can use facing the rear as long as possible. Read the labels to check weight limits. If you buy an infant-only seat, you will need a convertible seat later. Most babies need to use rear-facing convertible seats as they get larger, because they outgrow their infant-only seats before age one. Some products are made to carry a baby over 20 pounds facing the rear. Look for a seat with a higher weight limit when you shop. Practice buckling the seat into your car before your baby's first ride. More tips on choosing a seat: You'll save a little money if you buy one convertible seat to do the job from birth to 40 pounds, but an infant-only seat may be easier foray fit your newborn baby better.

An infant-only seat can be carried with you wherever you go. It can be used at home also. Some infant-only seats come in two parts. The base stays buckled in the vehicle, and the seat snaps in and out. You may find these convenient. If you want to use a convertible seat for a newborn baby, choose one without a padded shield in front of the baby. Shields do not fit small newborn babies properly. The shield comes up too high and may make proper adjustment of the harness difficult.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR BABY'S HEAD FLOPS FORWARD?

It's important for an infant to ride sitting semi-reclined (halfway back or 45 degrees from horizontal). In the car, you may find that the safety seat is too upright for a new baby who can't hold up his or her head. You can put a tightly rolled bath towel under the front edge of the safety seat to tilt it back a little so your baby's head lies back comfortably. Do not recline it too far. Harness straps must fit snugly on the body. Use lowest harness slots for a newborn infant. Keep the straps in the slots at or below your baby's shoulders for the rear-facing position. It is very important for harness straps to fit properly over the shoulders and between the legs. Dress your baby in clothes that keep legs free. If you want to cover your baby, buckle the harness around him first, then put a blanket over him. A bulky snowsuit or bunting can make the harness too loose. To fill empty spaces and give support, roll up couple of small blankets and tuck them in on each side of your baby's shoulders and head. If he still slumps down, put a rolled diaper between his legs behind the crotch strap. Thick padding should not be put underneath or behind the baby.

WHAT ABOUT SEATS FOR PREEMIES?

A baby born earlier than 37 weeks may need to use a car bed if he or she has any possibility of breathing problems when sitting semi-reclined. Ask your baby's doctor if your baby needs to be tested before discharge for breathing problems. Use a seat with the shortest distances from seat to harness strap slots, and from back to crotch strap. Use rolled blankets to keep the baby's head from slumping. Never place any extra cushioning under or behind the baby.

WHAT ARE SAFETY SEAT RECALLS?

Just like automobiles and many other products, a car safety seat may be "recalled" because of a defect that could injure your child. Manufacturers are required to fix the problem free of charge. If your seat is recalled, be sure to get it fixed right away.

When you hear about a seat being recalled: Find out which models and manufacturing dates are involved. Remember, the date of manufacture is the "birthday" of your seat. It helps you know if yours is one being recalled. Call the toll-free number of the company for information. If you are not sure if your seat

has been recalled or you don't know the correct telephone number, call the toll-free DOT Auto Safety Hotline in Washington, D.C., 1-888-DASH-2-DOT.

Before you call, write down this information about your child's seat:

Manufacturer's Name _____

Model Number/Name _____

Manufacture Date _____

This information is printed on labels attached underneath, on the side, or the back of the seat. Some of the information may be in number codes. Bring the seat to the telephone so you can answer questions about it.

DOES THE SEAT HAVE TO BE SENT BACK?

Not usually. Most problems can be fixed by replacing a part that the manufacturer will send you for free. Sometimes, with an older seat or when the company is out of business, you may be told to destroy it. To make sure it is not reused, break it with a sledgehammer, crush it, or take it completely apart, marking it "not for use as a car seat" before throwing it out in a black plastic bag.

SHOULD I GO ON USING A RECALLED SEAT?

Many defects are minor, but some are serious. All problems should be corrected as soon as possible. Unless you have another seat, you should go on using the recalled one while you are waiting for the repair kit. Using a recalled car safety seat almost always is safer than letting your child ride in a safety belt only.

New safety seats come with registration cards. If you buy a new one, be sure to register it. Then the manufacturer can let you know by mail if your child's seat has been recalled. If you have an older seat, call the Auto Safety Hotline or the manufacturer to find out how to register it.

If you think your seat has a problem that could be a safety defect, call the Auto Safety Hotline to report it. Also call the safety seat manufacturer. Many serious problems are discovered from reports by parents. Air bag safety:

BUCKLE UP EVERYONE! CHILDREN IN BACK!

An infant or child riding in the front seat can be seriously injured or killed by the inflating air bag. An air bag is not a soft pillow. To do its important job, an air bag comes out of the dashboard very fast, faster than the blink of an eye. Many people's lives have been saved by air bags.

The force of an air bag can hurt people who are too close to it. Drivers can prevent injuries to adults and children from air bags by following these safety steps.

AIR BAG SAFETY STEPS

- ◆ Infants in rear-facing child safety seats must never ride in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag.
- ◆ Children 12 and under should ride buckled up in the rear seat. They should use child safety seats, booster seats, or safety belts appropriate for their age and size.
- ◆ Everyone should buckle up with both lap AND shoulder belts on every trip. Driver and front passenger seats should be moved as far back from the dashboard as practical.
- ◆ Infants under age one must ride facing the rear of the car in the rear seat. Parents should feel just as comfortable in this situation as they do when they put their babies down for a nap and leave the room. If a baby has special health needs and requires full-time supervision, ask another adult to ride with the baby in the back seat and travel alone as little as possible until the health problem is resolved.
- ◆ Check your vehicle owner's manual and the instructions provided with your child safety seat for information on air bags and safety seat use.

WHY HAVE CHILDREN DIED IN VEHICLES WITH AIR BAGS?

In almost all cases in which an infant died, the baby was riding in a rear-facing safety seat in the front passenger seat. The back of the safety seat was so close to the dashboard that the air bag hit the safety seat with tremendous force. The force broke the back of the safety seat and caused a fatal brain injury. Child safety seats are not designed to protect against this extreme impact.

In almost all cases in which a child over age 1 has died from impact by the air bag, he or she was "out of position" – either unbuckled, or not wearing the shoulder portion of the safety belt. The child slid or flexed forward during pre-crash braking, so the head and neck were close to the dashboard at the time the air bag was triggered. Severe head or neck injuries occurred.

If a child is sitting against the seat back, fully restrained by a forward-facing child safety seat or a lap/shoulder belt and the seat is pushed all the way back, the danger from the air bag is reduced.

WHAT ABOUT SPORTS CARS AND PICKUP TRUCKS?

If there is no rear seat and no air bag shut-off switch, a child is at high risk from a passenger air bag.

Some pickup trucks made since model year 1996 have switches to shut off the passenger air bag. Other vehicles may have them in future years. Turning off the switch is the best way to protect an infant riding in a rear-facing safety seat or an older child using a safety seat, booster, or safety belt.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE EXCEPT PUTTING A CHILD IN FRONT?

If there is no room in back, a child over age one may have to ride in the front seat. Here's how to reduce the risk:

- ◆ Make sure the child is correctly buckled up with the vehicle seat moved as far back as possible.
- ◆ A toddler/preschooler should use a forward-facing child safety seat; an older child should use a belt-positioning booster or lap/shoulder belt.
- ◆ Fasten the harness or lap/shoulder belt securely. Make sure an older child does not slip out of the shoulder belt or lean toward the dashboard.

Vehicle owners and lessees can obtain an on-off switch for one or both of their air bags only if they can certify that they are, or a user of their vehicle is, in one of the four risk groups: infants in rear-facing infant seats, drivers or passengers with unusual medical or physical conditions, children ages 1 to 12, or drivers who cannot get back 10 inches from the air bag cover. To be considered eligible for an on-off switch, a NHTSA request form must be filled out and returned to NHTSA. Forms are available from state motor vehicle offices and may be available from automobile dealerships and repair facilities. Forms can also be requested by contacting NHTSA's Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT or visiting the NHTSA Web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>.

For a car seat inspection, contact the Traffic Unit at (760) 839-4707.