

Proper Winter Car Seat Use—Safe & Warm

Selecting and Using the Correct Car Seat

Selecting a child's car seat can be confusing. It is important to understand that all car seats are crash-tested to meet the same federal motor vehicle safety standards. There is not a specific car seat model or manufacturer that is the best. The right car seat fits your child and your car, and is the one you will use correctly every time you travel. Not only will your child ride as safely as possible, you will be establishing a foundation for a lifelong habit of seat belt use every time your child travels.

Tips for choosing the right car seat:

- ◆ Select a car seat based on your **child's**:
 - ◆ **Age**
 - ◆ **Weight**
 - ◆ **Height**
 - ◆ **Physical Development, and**
 - ◆ **Behavioral Needs.**
- ◆ **Read the car seat manufacturer's instructions** to learn how to properly secure your child.
- ◆ **Read the vehicle owner's manual** on how to properly install a car seat using either the vehicle seat belt or the LATCH system.
- ◆ Install the car seat in your vehicle to ensure the car seat can be tightly secured following manufacturer's instructions.
- ◆ Keep your child in a car seat as long as possible, until the maximum height or weight allowed by the manufacturer.
- ◆ **Secure children in a back seat until at least 12 years of age.**

General Winter Harnessing Safety Guides

- ◆ Purchase coats that come in layers or offer warmth with thinner fabrics and fillers.
- ◆ Place a blanket over the child in a car seat for additional warmth.
- ◆ Put your child's coat on backwards once in the car and buckled:
 - ◆ Secure the child in the car seat with the clothes that will be worn while indoors.
 - ◆ Buckle and tighten the harness snugly. A snug harness does not allow any slack. It lies in a relatively straight line without pressing on the child's body and pushing it into an unnatural position. The harness should be snug enough on the child that you cannot pinch any extra webbing.
 - ◆ Slip the child's arms through the sleeves to wear the coat backwards and over the snug harness.
 - ◆ In the event of a crash, the snug harness will keep the child secure in the car seat.



Securing infants using rear-facing infant carriers

- ◆ Store the infant carrier portion of the car seat inside the house to keep it warm. Keeping the car seat at room temperature will reduce the loss of the child's body heat when placed in the vehicle.
- ◆ Secure the child properly in the infant carrier while inside the house to avoid the child being outside in the cold for too long.
- ◆ Do not use non-regulated products such as blankets that attach to the car seat through the harness system. Remember, if the item did not come with the car seat, it has not been crash tested and may interfere with the protection provided during a crash.



Securing toddlers & pre-school children in car seats

- ◆ Avoid using heavy snowsuits or extra bulky coats. The extra padding in coats and snowsuits will make it difficult to properly tighten the car seat's harness. In a crash, the padding will compress, allowing slack in the harness.
- ◆ Get in the vehicle and close the door before securing the child with the harness of the car seat. The child is protected from exposure to the wind and/or cold, allowing you to take the time to correctly buckle and tighten the harness snugly.

Avoid Using...

- ◆ Puffy coats, buntings and snowsuits or too much padding under the harness.
- ◆ Head roll supports that do not come with the car seat (non-regulated). These items can interfere with the harness, add padding under the child and affect how the car seat protects in a crash.
- ◆ Use car Seat covers that cover the entire car seat for warmth & decoration. Unless the car seat cover comes with the car seat, it should not be used in the car during travel.



Here are some steps you can use to determine if the child's coat is too bulky and not safe to use under the harness while traveling in the car:

- ◆ Put the coat on the child and secure the child in the car seat. Fasten and adjust the harness to snugly fit the child. A snug harness does not allow the webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger when pinched at the shoulder.
- ◆ Without loosening the harness, unbuckle and remove the child from the car seat.
- ◆ Remove the coat and place the child back in the car seat. Buckle the harness straps. If you can pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger, the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.



Tips for Safe Winter Travel

Make sure to adjust your driving to suit winter conditions...

The winter season is upon us. Snow and wintry weather can be great fun for children but can also lead to unpredictable and dangerous road conditions for drivers. Additional preparations can help to make your trip safer, whether you are traveling near or far.

PREPARE for the Trip; PROTECT ALL Passengers; and PREVENT Crashes on the Road.

PREPARE for the Trip

- ◆ Maintain Your Car: Check the battery, tire tread/pressure, vehicle fluids, and hoses. Check the headlights, brake lights, windshield wipers, heater and defrosters. Remove snow from the windows, roof, and trunk surfaces.
- ◆ Pack your vehicle for sudden emergencies. Have on-hand:
 - ◆ A flashlight
 - ◆ Jumper cables
 - ◆ Supplies to help if you get stuck in the snow, such as sand or kitty litter for traction, tire chains
 - ◆ A shovel, snow brush and ice scraper
 - ◆ Warning devices (like flares)
 - ◆ Blankets, additional warm clothing and gloves
 - ◆ For long trips, add food and water, medication, and cell phone and charger.
- ◆ Stopped or Stalled? Stay in your car, put bright markers on the antenna or windows and shine the dome light. If you turn the car on, clear the exhaust pipe and run the car just enough to stay warm.
- ◆ Plan Your route and allow plenty of time.
- ◆ Check the weather and leave early, if necessary. Avoid traveling at night.
- ◆ Be familiar with the driving directions, and let others know your route and expected arrival time.
- ◆ Practice ice and snow driving maneuvers in an empty parking lot.
 - ◆ Steer into a skid.
 - ◆ Know what your brakes will do: stomp on antilock brakes or pump on non-antilock brakes.
 - ◆ Stopping distances are longer on water-covered ice and ice.

PROTECT All Passengers

- ◆ Buckle-up and correctly use the appropriate car seat.
- ◆ Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active passenger-side air bag.
- ◆ Avoid puffy or bulky coats on children when traveling. A thin jacket allows the harness to be snug. A blanket can then be placed over the child.
- ◆ Secure children age 12 and younger in a back seat.
- ◆ Take your child's car seat to a local fitting station or car seat check. Go to www.pakidstravelsafe.org to find a local fitting station or a car seat check, or call 1-800-CAR BELT.



PREVENT Crashes on the Road

- ◆ Reduce your driving speed and increase the distance between cars. Slow down sooner than you would normally. Be prepared for black ice.
- ◆ Keep your eyes open for pedestrians walking in the road.
- ◆ Avoid fatigue – Get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours, and rotate drivers if possible.

Stay Focused: Avoid Driver Distraction

What is distracted driving?

Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving, endangering driver, passenger, and bystander safety. Activities may include:

- ◆ Texting
- ◆ Using a cell phone or smartphone
- ◆ Eating and drinking
- ◆ Talking to passengers
- ◆ Grooming
- ◆ Reading, including maps
- ◆ Using a navigation system
- ◆ Watching a video
- ◆ Adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player

Text messaging requires visual, manual, and cognitive attention making it the most distracting activity for the driver.

- ◆ **Commit to keeping your electronics out of your hand.** No text message or playlist is worth the risk.
- ◆ **Expect the unexpected.** You never know when you have to stop abruptly, so store items that can become a projectile in the trunk
- ◆ Remember, all vehicle occupants need their own seat belt or car seat, even for short rides. \
- ◆ There are approximately 1,500 nationally certified child passenger safety technicians in Pennsylvania who teach parents and caregivers how to properly use their child's car seat.
- ◆ Call 1-800-CAR-BELT or visit www.pakidstravelsafe.org for more information.

