

# Safety First—Maintaining Your Vehicle

## Safe Tire Tips

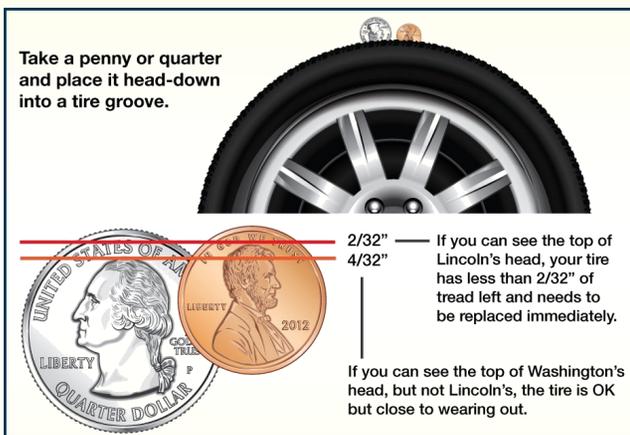


Maintaining a safe vehicle for your family includes checking and maintaining your tires.

**Well-maintained tires make your car safer, but fewer than half of all drivers check the condition of their tires.** Your tires are the only part of the car that has direct contact with the road. Tires affect your vehicle handling, ride, braking, and

safety. For optimum performance, tires must have the correct air pressure, tread depth, balance and the wheels of the vehicle must be properly aligned.

Checking your tires on a regular basis is an important step in protecting your safety and your automotive investment. Ideally, tire inspections should be performed monthly. If you drive over potholes and debris in the road, live in a cold climate, or drive long distances regularly, then you should inspect your tires more often.



Tire problems to look for during a visual inspection:

- ♦ **Over inflation:** Too much air pressure causes the tire's middle section to contact the road. This creates wear primarily in the center of the tread, with less wear at the tire's edges.
- ♦ **Under inflation:** Too little air pressure causes the tire's outer edges to contact the road. This creates wear primarily on both edges of the tire tread, with less wear in the center.
- ♦ **Tread wear on one edge of the tire:** This typically occurs when the wheels are out of alignment.
- ♦ **Erratic tread wear:** This is often called cupping, and may mean the wheel is out of balance, or that the shock absorbers or other suspension components need to be replaced.
- ♦ **Raised portion of the tread or sidewall:** May indicate that one of the belts in the tire has separated from those next to it.

## Seat Belts & Air Bags



**Seat belts and air bags are safety equipment that limit or prevent injury in the event of a vehicle crash.** Drivers and passengers tend to take the equipment for granted, but these safety measures can greatly reduce a person's risk of injury or even death. Seat belts and air bags are considered single-use items; designed to work just once -- protecting and limiting the movement of a passenger in the event of a crash.

A seat belt that has been worn during a crash may not provide the same level of protection in a subsequent crash. **After a crash, the seat belt may be damaged and the webbing may have stretched during the crash. The dealer should inspect the anchors for damage and replace them if needed.** It's advisable to replace any seat belts that were in use during a crash to ensure the belts will offer the same measure of protection should a collision occur in the future.

### Seat Belt Maintenance

The vehicle owner's manual should include recommendations regarding when to change seat belts. If it does not, drivers can speak with a dealership mechanic. Periodically check to see that the seat belt and the metal parts, such as buckles, latchplates, retractors, and anchors, work properly. Pull each belt out fully and look for frays, cuts, burns, and wear. Check that the latchplates work smoothly and the belts retract easily. Any belt that is not in good condition or not working properly will not provide good protection and should be replaced as soon as possible. If loose parts, deterioration, cuts or other damage on the webbing is found, the entire seat belt assembly should be replaced.

Crashes are never planned, so make sure to make **seat belt inspection** a routine part of your vehicle maintenance. Not checking or maintaining seat belts can result in serious injury or death if the seat belts do not work properly when needed. Check your seat belts regularly and have any problem corrected as soon as possible. It could save a life.



# Safely Maintaining Car Seats



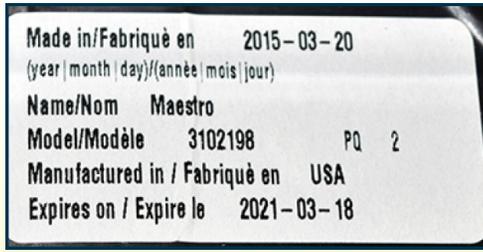
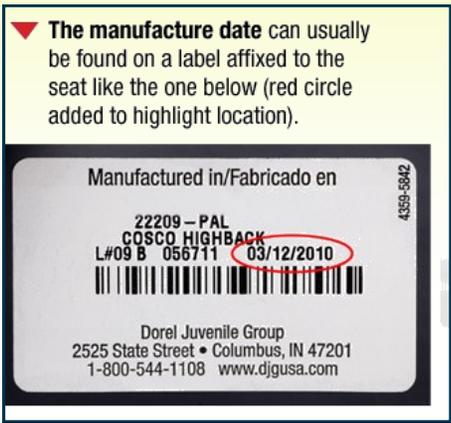
## When is a Car Seat Too Old to Use? Car Seat Expiration Dates

**Each car seat manufacturer determines the specific useful life span for their car seats.** Most manufacturers suggest replacing a car seat at 6 years from the date of manufacture, although some car seats have a useable life span up to 10 years. Expiration dates are a way for car seat manufacturers to provide guidance on the expected “useful” life of their car seat. Always follow the car seat manufacturer’s instructions on the life span for a car seat.

The car seat expiration date is based on the date of manufacture, not the date of purchase or use. The reason for the limits involve possible degradation of the plastic shell or other car seat parts, the possible loss/breakage of parts, and the fact that older car seats sometimes do not meet current government safety standards. Safety standards change over time as safer technology is developed. Expiration dates alert you to the possibility that your car seat may be worn out and may not have the most up-to-date safety features. It is very important to check the expiration date when acquiring a used car seat from family or friends.

Child safety seats are designed to meet all current safety standards when manufactured. Examples of how child restraints have changed and become safer or easier to use include the requirement for LATCH and/or tethers, as well as improvements for side impact protection. These changes provide added protection for the child during travel.

Always refer to the car seat manufacturer’s instructions to determine the recommended life span of a car seat. It is recommended that the use of a car seat be discontinued after a specified number of years from the date of manufacture. The date of manufacture can be found on the label that provides the model number. The sticker may be found on the back, side, or bottom of the car seat. **Some child restraint manufacturers are placing expiration dates molded into the plastic shell of the car seat.** The expiration date may be provided as a month and year or in number of years from the date of manufacture.



## What to do with a car seat after a crash...

### NHTSA Position on Replacing Child Safety Seats

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that child safety seats be replaced following a moderate or severe crash in order to ensure a continued high level of crash protection for child passengers. NHTSA does not recommend that a car seat be replaced following a minor crash.



### Minor crashes are those that meet ALL of the following criteria:

- The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site.
- The vehicle door nearest the safety seat was undamaged.
- There were no injuries to any of the vehicle occupants.
- The air bags (if present) did not deploy.
- There is no visible damage to the safety seat.

**Note:** The forces in a collision can sometimes cause unseen damage. This hidden damage may keep the car seat from properly protecting the child in future crashes. **The car seat manufacturer is the best judge of whether a car seat needs to be replaced following a crash.** Some car seat manufacturers recommend that a car seat be replaced after a crash of any severity, even a minor crash. **Always follow the car seat manufacturer’s instructions on car seat replacement.**

For more information, go to [www.pakidstravelsafe.org](http://www.pakidstravelsafe.org) or call 1-800-CAR-BELT.

