

## Make Safe Choices When Buckling Up Children

Children who are correctly buckled in a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt benefit from the single most effective way to protect vehicle occupants and reduce fatalities in a crash. Securing children in age and size appropriate car seats is the best way to keep children safe. It is also important to increase booster seat/seat belt use among children age 8 through 13 and to spread the message that they are safer in the back seat of a vehicle. By educating children and families on the importance of occupant protection, buckling up will become a habit for life.

- ◆ Selection: Choose a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt based on the child's age, weight, height, and developmental needs.
- ◆ Direction: Children should remain rear-facing as long as possible, until they reach the top weight or height limits allowed by the manufacturer.
- ◆ Location: Select a seating position with seat belts that can be locked or a seating position approved for LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) to secure the car seat. Children younger than 13 years of age should be secured in a back seat.
- ◆ Harness Adjustment and Fit: Place the harness through the correct harness slots located on the back of the car seat. Buckle the harness and secure the child snugly with the harness retainer clip placed at armpit level. You should NOT be able to pinch excess webbing at the shoulder or hips once the harness is buckled and snug.
- ◆ Installation: Read and follow the car seat manufacturer's instructions and the vehicle owner's manual for guidance on correctly installing and using the car seat, booster seat, and seat belt.

**Before Baby Arrives** - Buckling up through all stages of your pregnancy is the single most effective action to protect you and your unborn child in a crash. Place the shoulder belt across the chest (between the breasts) and the lap belt secured below the belly across the hips and pelvic bone. Move the vehicle seat back to keep as much distance as possible between the belly and the steering wheel.

### Rear-Facing



Secure infants and toddlers in a rear-facing car seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat.

Pennsylvania law requires children younger than two years of age to always ride in a rear-facing car seat. Never place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat with an active passenger-side front air bag.

*Traveling rear-facing is safer than forward-facing.*

### Forward-Facing



When children outgrow the rear-facing car seat, secure them in a forward-facing car seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat.

*Forward-Facing car seats reduce the risk of injury for children by 71% compared to children using the seat belt only.*

### Belt-Positioning Booster



Once children outgrow the forward-facing car seat, secure them in a belt-positioning booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt until the seat belt fits properly, typically when a child is approximately 4 feet 9 inches and between 8 and 12 years of age.

*Booster seats lower the risk of injury for children age 4 to 8 years by 45% compared to children using the seat belt alone.*

### Seat Belt



When children outgrow the belt-positioning booster seat, secure them in a properly fitted lap and shoulder belt. A lap and shoulder belt fits properly when the lap belt lays low and snug across the hips/upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the center of the chest and shoulder.

*The lap and shoulder seat belt reduces the risk of injury by 45%.*

**Children younger than age 13 should ride in a back seat.**

# Any Age, Weight or Height, Always Buckle Your Family Right

Follow best practice recommendations when selecting and securing children in the appropriate child restraint. Parents must become familiar with the car seat/belt-positioning booster seat, vehicle seat belt systems, LATCH and other vehicle safety features.

## 1. READ AND FOLLOW BOTH THE CAR SEAT AND VEHICLE OWNER'S MANUALS TO LEARN HOW TO INSTALL AND CORRECTLY USE A CAR SEAT.

- ◆ Labels on car seats provide important information:
  - ◆ Basic instructions for correct installation and use
  - ◆ Name, address, and contact information of the manufacturer
  - ◆ Model Number and Manufacture Date
  - ◆ Expiration Date of the car seat



## 2. Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat.

- ◆ In Pennsylvania, always secure children younger than 2 years of age in a rear-facing car seat.
- ◆ Convertible car seats are approved for rear-facing use up to 40—50 pounds and should be considered for children who have exceeded the limits of a rear-facing only car seat.



## 3. Infants always ride rear-facing at no more than a 45-degree recline angle.

- ◆ The correct angle enables the infant to maintain an open airway.

## 4. Children who have outgrown a rear-facing car seat should be secured in a forward-facing car seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat.



## 5. Thread the car seat harness through the correct slots:

- ◆ at or below the shoulders for rear-facing.
- ◆ at or above the shoulders for forward-facing in a reinforced slot.

## 6. The car seat harness should not allow any slack. A snug harness:

- ◆ lies in a relatively straight line without sagging.
- ◆ should not, however, be so tight as to press into a child's body.

## 7. NEVER place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat of a vehicle with an active passenger-side front air bag.

- ◆ A rear-facing car seat may be used in a front seat when there is an air bag on/off switch and the switch is in the OFF position.
- ◆ To determine if air bags are present in the vehicle, check the:
  - ◆ sun visor
  - ◆ dashboard
  - ◆ vehicle owner's manual



## 8. Children younger than age 13 should ride in a back seat. Forward-facing children can ride in the front seat with an active passenger-side front air bag when no other back seat position is available and the child is properly secured. Always:

- ◆ Push the vehicle seat back as far as possible.
- ◆ Use the car seat harness or the seat belt following the manufacturer's instructions.

## 9. Seat Belt: Place the vehicle seat belt through the correct belt path following the car seat manufacturer's instructions.

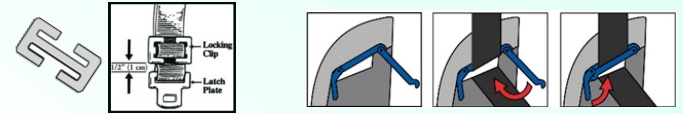
## 10. TIGHTEN and LOCK the vehicle seat belt following instructions found in the vehicle owner's manual.

- ◆ Check for tightness at the seat belt path.
- ◆ The car seat should NOT move more than one-inch when pulled side-to-side or front-to-back at the belt path.



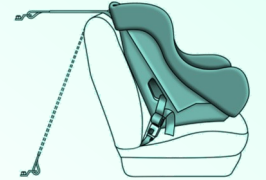
## 11. When the seat belt cannot be locked, use one of the following approved methods as directed by the vehicle and/or car seat manufacturer:

- ◆ Locking Clip/Lock-Off
- ◆ Flip the Latchplate
- ◆ Twist the Buckle Stalk
- ◆ Belt-Shortening Clip



## 12. LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children): Route the lower anchor connector webbing through the designated belt path following the manufacturer's instructions.

- ◆ Attach the lower anchor connectors on the car seat to the lower anchors in the vehicle following both the car seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual.
- ◆ Check for tightness at the lower anchor / seat belt path.
- ◆ Attach the tether connector (if applicable) to the tether anchor and tighten.



Car seat and vehicle manufacturers provide a maximum weight limit for lower anchor and tether use. Use the seat belt when the lower anchor weight limit is met. Discontinue the use of lower anchors and the tether following the car seat and manufacturer's instructions.

## 13. Children who have outgrown their forward-facing car seat should be properly secured in a booster seat until the vehicle lap and shoulder belt fits correctly, at approximately 4'9" and between 8 and 12 years of age.



## 14. The vehicle lap and shoulder belt can be used safely when the child is able to:

- ◆ Sit with their back and hips against the vehicle seat back without slouching.
- ◆ Bend their knees over the front edge of the vehicle seat and their feet flat on the floor.
- ◆ Place the snug shoulder belt across the center of the chest and shoulder.
- ◆ Place the lap belt low and snug across the hips/upper thighs.
- ◆ Stay in position for the entire ride.

## 15. When in doubt, don't guess - read instructions and/or call for technical assistance:

- ◆ TIPP: 1-800-CAR BELT or [www.pakidstravelsafe.org](http://www.pakidstravelsafe.org)
- ◆ NHTSA: 1-888-dash2dot or [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
- ◆ [www.safercar.gov/parents/index.htm](http://www.safercar.gov/parents/index.htm)

