

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.

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 up to 71% compared to children using a 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 tall 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% - 60% in passenger cars and light trucks.

Seat Belt Safety Tips During Pregnancy

1. Wear your seat belt. Buckling up is the single most effective action to take to protect you and your unborn child in a crash. Never drive or ride in a car without buckling up.
2. Place the shoulder belt across your chest and away from your neck.
 - ◆ Do not place the shoulder belt under your arm or behind our back.
3. Secure the lap belt **BELOW** your belly, snugly across your hips and pelvic bone.
 - ◆ **NEVER** place the lap belt over or on top of the belly.
4. Adjust the vehicle seat. Keep as much distance as possible between the belly and the steering wheel.
 - ◆ When driving, if you need additional room, consider adjusting the steering wheel or having someone else drive, if possible.
 - ◆ As a passenger, move your seat back as far as possible.
5. Keep Airbags Activated. Seat belts and air bags work together to provide the best protection for you and your unborn child.

If you are involved in a crash, seek medical attention, even if you think you are not injured, regardless if you were the driver or passenger.



Achieving Correct Car Seat Use

SELECTION

Select a car seat, belt-positioning booster seat, or seat belt that is appropriate for the child's age, weight, height, and developmental level.

Check the car seat to determine if it is:

- ◆ Expired,
- ◆ Recalled, or
- ◆ Missing labels.

Examine the car seat to assure it is in good working condition and has not been involved in a crash.

Why: Car seats and booster seats protect passengers who are too small to get the full safety benefit from an adult seat belt. Car Seats and belt-positioning booster seats:

- ◆ Are designed to keep children in position within the vehicle.
- ◆ Prevent contact with interior surfaces of the vehicle and other occupants.
- ◆ Provide "ride-down" by extending the time it takes for the child to slow down and reduces the crash forces exerted on the child's body.



Rear Facing:

- ◆ Infant
- ◆ Convertible

Forward Facing:

- ◆ Convertible
- ◆ Combination
- ◆ 3-in-1, 4-in-1, 5-in-1



Belt-Positioning Booster Seat:

- ◆ High-Back
- ◆ Backless

Vehicle Seat Belt

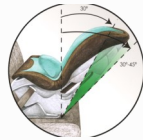
- ◆ Lap and Shoulder Seat Belt



DIRECTION

Place the car seat on the vehicle seat facing the correct direction based on the child's age, weight, height, and developmental level.

- ◆ Rear-Facing
- ◆ Forward-Facing



Why: Moving children to the next car seat stage before they are ready puts them at greater risk for injury in a crash. Children younger than 2 years are better protected by riding rear-facing to the height and weight limits of their convertible car seat.

- ◆ NHTSA suggests that children ride rear-facing to the upper limits of their car seat. Convertible car seats with higher rear-facing weight and height limits allow children to ride rear-facing beyond 2 years of age.

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children:

- ◆ Ride in a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible, until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
- ◆ Once children have outgrown 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 their car seat manufacturer.

Children are also being moved to a belt-positioning booster seat or a seat belt early, putting them at greater risk.

LOCATION

Place the car seat or belt-positioning booster seat in an appropriate location in the vehicle.

- ◆ **Forward-facing vehicle seat, and**
- ◆ **Seat belt or LATCH is available to tightly secure the car seat.**

Why: The safest place for children younger than 13 years of age to ride is the back seat, away from frontal air bags.

- ◆ The back seat eliminates the risk of being injured by the passenger-side front air bag, which is designed to provide additional protection for adults who are properly secured with the seat belt.
- ◆ Read the vehicle owner's manual to locate the air bags in the vehicle.
- ◆ **NEVER place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active passenger-side front air bag.**
- ◆ Consider the occupant protection needs of all passengers when installing a car seat. Select a seating position in a back seat that will provide an optimal installation for the car seat.
- ◆ Consider family needs. If parking on a busy street, place the child's car seat on the curb side for optimal protection when accessing the vehicle.
- ◆ **NEVER leave children alone in the car, not even for a minute.**

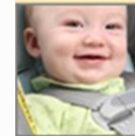
HARNESS ADJUSTMENT AND FIT

Secure the child correctly in the car seat, booster seat, or seat belt, following the car seat manufacturer's instructions.

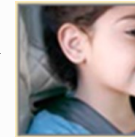
Why: Correct harness adjustment and fit or a properly positioned lap and shoulder belt, in a belt-positioning booster seat or vehicle seat, ensures the child is able to take advantage of the crash protection that the harness or seat belt provides.

- ◆ The harness holds the child snugly in the car seat. The correctly secured child will not slide up or out of position in a crash.

Rear-Facing: The harness is placed **AT or BELOW** the child's shoulders.



Forward-Facing: The harness is placed **AT or ABOVE** the child's shoulders.



Belt-Positioning Booster Seat and Seat Belt: Correct seat belt fit is very important.

- ◆ Shoulder belt is snug across the center of the child's shoulder and chest.
- ◆ Lap belt is low and snug across the child's hips/upper thighs.



INSTALLATION

Install the car seat or booster seat in the vehicle correctly.

Why: A car seat that is installed correctly provides optimal protection in a crash, and improves the child's safety.

- ◆ Car seats can be installed with either the seat belt or the lower anchors.



- ◆ Forward-facing car seats should always utilize the tether, following the car seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions.



Tightly install the car seat using either the seat belt or lower anchor connectors.

- ◆ Thread and tighten the seat belt or lower anchor connectors through the correct belt path.
- ◆ Buckle and lock the seat belt or attach the connectors to the lower anchors in the vehicle. Tighten to ensure the car seat does not move more than one-inch when checked at the belt path.
- ◆ While the seat belt and lower anchor systems are different, they are equally safe. Follow the car seat instructions and vehicle manual guidance to secure the car seat. Use the seat belt or lower anchors – but NOT both (unless approved by the car seat and vehicle manufacturer).