



The Danger of Winter Coats in Car Seats



Cooler weather requires children to be bundled up to stay warm. Selecting a bulky coat may keep a child warm, but does not allow the car seat harness to be adjusted for a snug fit. A bulky coat can compress in a crash and create slack in the harness. A loose harness does not correctly secure a child in a crash, increasing the child's movement and possible ejection from the car seat. A snug harness keeps the child in the car seat and spreads the crash forces over a large area of the body. The harness provides the best protection when correctly placed on the child and tightened snugly.

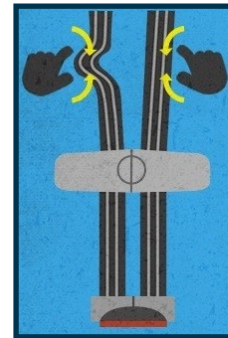
To determine if the child's coat is too bulky and not safe to use under the harness while traveling in the car:



1. Put the coat on the child and correctly place the car seat harness on the child's body. Secure the harness and adjust snugly to fit the child. A snug harness does not allow the webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger when pinched at the shoulder.

2. Without loosening the harness, unbuckle and remove the child from the car seat.

3. Remove the coat and place the child back in the car seat. Correctly place the harness on the child's body and 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.



Staying Safe and Warm in a Car Seat this Winter

- ♦ Warm up the car in a well-ventilated area prior to taking the child outside.
- ♦ Dress children in thin layers that fit the child.
- ♦ Purchase coats that come in layers or offer warmth with thinner fabrics such as a thin down or fleece jacket.
- ♦ Put the child's coat on backwards once the harness is buckled and tightened.
 - ♦ 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.
- ♦ Place a blanket over the child who is secured in a car seat for additional warmth.
- ♦ In the event of a crash, the snug harness will keep the child secure.



Car Seat Instructions

Vehicle Owner's Manual



Install the Car Seat Correctly in the Vehicle

A car seat that is installed correctly provides the best protection in a crash and increases the child's safety in a crash. Always follow the instructions found in the car seat and vehicle owner's manual to achieve a correct installation. Useful tips to obtain a correct installation:

- ♦ **Read the car seat instruction manual and the portion of your vehicle owner's manual covering car seat installation.**
- ♦ Place the car seat in a back seat of the vehicle and secure tightly with a seat belt or LATCH. The tightly secured car seat does not move forward or side-to-side more than an inch when pulled at the belt path.

Secure Children Correctly In the Car Seat

A secure harness keeps the child safer in a crash by spreading the crash forces across the strongest areas of the body. The correct placement of the harness on the child's shoulder will reduce the child's movement in a crash.

- ♦ **Rear-facing:** The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the slot that is **at or below** the child's shoulders.
- ♦ **Forward-facing:** The harness straps should lie flat and be threaded through the **reinforced slot** that is **at or above** the child's shoulders.
- ♦ Buckle the harness and secure the chest clip. Tighten the harness until it is snug on the child.
 - ♦ The harness is snug when the webbing cannot be pinched at the shoulder.
 - ♦ Make sure the chest clip on the harness is at armpit level.



Safe Sleep and Car Seat Safety Tips for Infants

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.



Car Seats Not Recommended for Sleeping

Always secure a child with a snug harness when seated in a car seat. The car seat harness prevents the child from sliding down, squirming out of the seat, or rolling over into a position where their face is in contact with the car seat's padding, all of which could lead to suffocation. Keep in mind that car seats are designed to be used with adult supervision, so check regularly, even when a child is appropriately positioned.

Use the Car Seat With An Approved Stroller: Some rear-facing only car seats are designed for use with a stroller. The car seat locks into place allowing a sleeping baby to be transferred from the vehicle to the stroller travel system without removing the baby from the car seat or carrier. When using the car seat travel system, never leave the child unattended. The car seat harness should remain snug, correctly fitted, and buckled. Loosening the harness allows the child to slide out of position making it difficult to breathe or becoming entangled with the car seat harness around their neck.

Do Not Use a Seat Outside of the Car or Approved Stroller:

Always follow the car seat manufacturer's instructions that state children should be removed from the car seat once arriving at your destination. Children who remain in their car seat once it is removed from the vehicle or stroller are at risk of injury. Reduce risk of injury by:

- ♦ Keeping the child in view and always provide adult supervision,
- ♦ Placing the car seat on the ground and not on:
 - ♦ An elevated surface, like a countertop
 - ♦ A soft surface like a bed, couch, or chair
 - ♦ Not placing the car seat on an uneven or unstable surface that allows the child's head to fall forward and obstruct the airway.



Sleeping Devices that Place an Infant on an Angled Sleeping Surface

“Infant Deaths in Sitting Devices Outside of Travel”

Every year, infants fall victim to sleep-related deaths in sitting devices like car seats, bouncers or swings used for routine sleep. A 10-year study of 11,779 infant sleep-related deaths showed that 348 (3%) babies died in sitting devices, in many cases the child was seated in their car seat. More than 90% of the time, the car seat was not being used as directed. (Liaw P, et al. *Pediatrics*. May 20, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-2576>).



Federal Legislation and American Academy of Pediatrics Policy

Legislation passed by the Federal Government and an updated AAP Policy Statement address inclined sleeping devices. These devices have been linked to an increased risk of suffocation and airway obstruction. Car seats are essential for safe travel and many infants and children do fall asleep in their car seats. A sleeping child is safe in a properly installed and used car seat during travel. If the infant is still sleeping once arriving at your destination, the best thing to do is to remove the child from the car seat and place the child in a safe sleep environment, on their back on a firm sleeping surface.

Safe Sleep for Babies Act of 2021: Public Law 117-126 / 117th Congress- Approved 5/16/2022

Banning of Inclined Sleepers for Infants:

- ♦ Takes effect not later than 180 days after date of enactment.
- ♦ Inclined sleeper for infants means a product with an inclined slope of greater than 10° designed to provide sleeping accommodations for an infant up to one year old.

<https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ126/PLAW-117publ126.pdf>

AAP Policy Statement: “Sleep-Related Infant Deaths: Updated 2022 Recommendations for Reducing Infant Deaths in the Sleep Environment”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a safe sleep environment to reduce the risk of all sleep-related deaths. This includes supine positioning and the use of a firm, non-inclined sleep surface.

- ♦ Sitting devices, such as car seats, strollers, swings, infant carriers, and infant slings, are not recommended for routine sleep in the hospital or at home, particularly for infants aged <4 months.
- ♦ When infants fall asleep in a sitting device, remove them from the product and move them to a crib or other appropriate flat surface as soon as it is safe and practical. Car seats and similar products are not stable on a crib mattress or other elevated surfaces.
- ♦ Do not leave infants unattended in car seats and similar products, and do not place or leave infants in car seats and similar products with the straps unbuckled or partially buckled.

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/doi/10.1542/peds.2022-057990/188304/Sleep-Related-Infant-Deaths-Updated-2022>