

# 2018 AAP Recommendations for Car Seat Use

The most dangerous daily activity for United States children is riding in a car. Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children 4 years of age and older. Using the correct car seat or booster seat can help decrease the risk of death or serious injury by over 70%.

## Why the Change?

The 2018 recommendation that all children be secured in a rear-facing car seat as long as possible is a significant change that was based on motor vehicle crash data in the United States. This recommendation highlights the need to support a child's head, neck and spine and the importance of the crash forces being spread across the entire body. Young children have larger heads compared to the rest of their body size and the bones in their spine are still developing. When a vehicle makes a sudden stop or is involved in a crash, a rear-facing car seat will cradle a child's body and spread out the force of the crash, reducing the risk of injury to the head, neck, and spine.



## Summary of Evidence-Based Best Practice Recommendations

- ♦ All infants and toddlers should ride in a **rear-facing child safety seat** until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat's manufacturer.
- ♦ Children who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their child safety seat, should use a **forward-facing child safety seat** with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
- ♦ All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their child safety seat should use a **belt-positioning booster seat** until the vehicle lap and shoulder seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.
- ♦ When children are old enough and large enough to use the **vehicle seat belt** alone, they should use a lap and shoulder belt.
- ♦ All children younger than 13 should be restrained in the **rear seat** of the vehicle.

## SUMMARY OF PENNSYLVANIA'S CHILD PASSENGER OCCUPANT PROTECTION LAW

(Act 53, 1983 / Act 22, 1993 / Act 229, 2002 / Act 81, 2011 / Act 43, 2016)

All drivers operating a passenger car, Class I and Class II truck, classic motor vehicle, antique motor vehicle or motor home shall securely fasten infants and children under 8 years of age in an approved child restraint/booster when the child is riding anywhere in the motor vehicle, including the cargo area. The car seat/booster seat may be in any seating position in the vehicle that is equipped with a seat belt. (However, for maximum protection, a back seat is preferable.)

All drivers transporting children under 4 years of age are responsible to securely restrain those children in an approved child passenger restraint system.

- ♦ A child younger than two years of age shall be secured in a rear-facing child passenger restraint system, to be used until the child outgrows the maximum weight and height limits designated by the car seat manufacturer. (Primary Law)

All drivers transporting children 4 years of age or older but under 8 years of age are responsible to securely restrain those children in a seat belt system and an appropriately fitting child booster seat. (Primary Law)

All drivers transporting children 8 years of age but under 18 years of age are responsible to securely restrain those children in a properly adjusted seat belt system. (Primary Law)



# Winter Safety: Staying Warm & Safe

## Why are bulky winter coats **NOT** recommended with car seats?

As cold winter weather settles into Pennsylvania, it is important for parents and caregivers to keep kids warm, but with safety in mind. **Bulky winter coats and car seats are a dangerous combination.**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends children do not wear bulky coats in their car seats. Coats should be removed before children are buckled up for every ride, every time. Why is this? Winter coats are bulky; even when children appear to be snugly fitted to their car seats, the coats can introduce slack to the harnessing system.

As a general rule of thumb, dress children in a sweatshirt or light jacket under the harness straps of a car seat. Dress in light layers to keep children safe without adding bulk or puffy material between the harness of the car seat and the child's body.

**During a crash, all of the materials of a bulky winter coat or a non-regulated infant swaddling product will compress making the harness straps loose on the child.** When the harness straps are not snug on the child, they can compromise the way the harness system protects the child. A loose harness allows the child to have additional forward movement in a crash which is associated with greater injury risks. In a worst-case scenario, a loose harness could allow the child to slip through the straps and come out of the car seat.



## Make Sure Your Child is Warm and Safe

### 4-step check to see if your child's coat is too bulky and not safe to wear under the car seat harness:

1. Put the coat on your child and secure them with a snug harness in the car seat. A snug harness does not allow the webbing to be folded between your thumb and forefinger.
2. **Without loosening the harness**, unbuckle and remove your child from the car seat.
3. Take the coat off and put your child back in the car seat and buckle the harness straps. Do not tighten the harness. The harness tightness remains adjusted at the same tightness as when the child was wearing the coat.
4. If you can now fold the webbing when pinched between your thumb and forefinger then the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.



## How to Balance Warmth and Safety

### For infants:

- ♦ Dress the infant as if they were going to be indoors. A sweater or light jacket will be enough.
- ♦ When possible, warm the vehicle up in advance of taking the infant outside.
- ♦ Place the child securely in carrier of the rear-facing only car seat making sure the harness straps are snug (remember if you can pinch the webbing together between your thumb and forefinger the harness is too loose). Make sure the harness retainer clip is at armpit level.
- ♦ Cover the infant in the car seat with a blanket after securing the harness and then carry the infant out to the car.
- ♦ Aftermarket covers (fitted blankets) designed to provide warmth can be used only if approved by the manufacturer of your car seat. The approved covers have been tested with the car seat and it has been determined that it will not compromise your child's safety.
- ♦ As the car warms up you can remove blankets and then place them over the infant when you arrive at your destination.



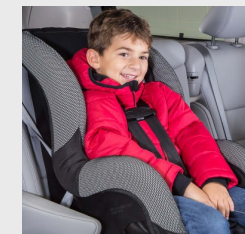
NOT CORRECT



CORRECT

### For toddlers and preschoolers:

- ♦ Dress the child comfortably and put on their coat and hat for the walk out to the car.
- ♦ Take off the coat and buckle the child snugly in the harness.
- ♦ Slip the child's arm through the sleeves to wear the coat backwards or you can use blankets to cover the child.
- ♦ When purchasing winter coats, look for coats that provide warmth without bulk.



NOT CORRECT



CORRECT