

Car Seat Guidelines for Families

Every 32 seconds in 2018, one child under the age of 13 in a passenger vehicle was involved in a crash. Many times, injuries and deaths can be prevented by proper use of car seats, boosters, and seat belts.



Rear-Facing

All infants and toddlers should ride 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 2 years of age to always ride in a rear-facing car seat.

Traveling rear-facing is safer than forward-facing.

Never place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat with an active passenger-side front air bag.



Forward-Facing

Children who have outgrown the 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.

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



**Belt-Positioning
Booster Seat**

All children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing car seat limit, should be secured 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 belts reduce the risk of injury by 45%.



All children younger than 13 years of age should be secured in a back seat of the vehicle. In the event of a crash, even buckled up, a child is more likely to be injured or killed if they are sitting in the front seat. Whether they are in a car seat, booster seat, or using a seat belt, the only place where your children under 13 belong is in the back seat.

Remember:

Read and carefully follow the installation instructions included with a car seat, as well as the vehicle owner's manual. Failure to do this can lead to incorrect installation, exposing a child passenger to the risk of injury or death in a crash.



Car Seats Cleaning Tips

Allow Time for Cleaning the Car Seat

- ◆ Proper cleaning takes time. Allow time for the car seat padding, buckle and all the cleaned parts to fully dry. Air drying may take several hours or even a day. Make other arrangements for children who need to be transported during this time.

Always Read and Follow the Car Seat Manufacturer's Instructions

- ◆ Each car seat manufacturer has specific instructions on how to clean their car seat. Follow the cleaning instructions provided by the manufacturer.



Maintain Car Seat Between Cleanings

- ◆ Routinely vacuum crumbs or food and wipe down the car seat. Spot cleaning will make it easier to maintain the car seat and it may be less likely to take the car seat apart for cleaning.

Wash as Directed

Use mild soap and water temperature as directed by the manufacturer's instructions when washing the car seat pad or parts.

Do NOT use bleach or strong cleaners.

- ◆ **Car Seat Pad:** Confirm whether the pad is machine washable or must be cleaned by hand washing. Spot-cleaning may be recommended. Plan on air drying the pad, unless the instructions say using the dryer is permitted.
- ◆ **Car Seat Webbing - Harness / LATCH Straps:** Many harnesses cannot be immersed in water.
 - ◆ Manufacturers may recommend wiping the harness with mild soap and water to clean and allowing the harness to air dry. Clean with a damp soft cloth or sponge to wipe the harness or webbing with mild soap and water. Allow to air dry.
- ◆ **Car Seat Shell:** Clean with mild soap and water. Rinse off the soap with clean water and dry with a soft cloth.
 - ◆ Take care not to damage any labels when cleaning the car seat.
- ◆ **Never** use an iron or heat on the car seat pads or webbing. The heat can damage the fibers.



Reassemble the Car Seat Correctly

- ◆ Carefully follow the car seat instructions to assemble the car seat correctly.
- ◆ Take pictures of the car seat parts and harness assembly before taking the car seat apart. The pictures will serve as a guide as you reassemble the car seat.
- ◆ Make sure the harness is not twisted.
- ◆ Pull on the harness system to make sure it is securely installed.
- ◆ Follow the car seat instructions to correctly insert the buckle through the shell and pad of the car seat.

Evaluate the Crotch Buckle and Lower Anchor Push-On Connectors

Clean as needed to ensure proper latching. Make sure the buckle is functioning properly and is free of debris. Many car seat manufacturers recommend using water when cleaning buckles or push-on LATCH connectors. To clean:

- ◆ Remove the buckle from the car seat.
- ◆ Thoroughly rinse the buckle with warm water.
 - ◆ **Do Not** submerge the buckle webbing into the water.
 - ◆ **Do Not** soak the buckle or use soap, household detergents, solvents, or lubricants.
- ◆ Remove the buckle from the water and shake out any excess water. Allow the buckle to air dry.
- ◆ Test the buckle by fastening and unfastening the buckle tongues on both sides of the buckle until you hear a click. If you do not hear a click for each buckle tongue you may need to repeat the cleaning process.
- ◆ **Never** use oil lubricants or chemicals in the buckle as it may change the way the buckle functions.