

BAByTalk

A Publication for Parents from Boys Town Pediatrics



Infant Car Seat Safety Priority for Parents and Caregivers

From the time you take your newborn home from the hospital until about the age of 8 years, your child will need to be safely secured in a child restraint. From birth until 12 months of age or 20 pounds, the Nebraska law states that a child must remain rear facing in either an infant seat or a convertible car seat whenever in a moving vehicle. The harness straps must be at or below the shoulder level and fit snugly. The harness clip must be at armpit level. It will be important that the seat move less than an inch when pulled from side to side at the belt path. Most hospitals require that a nurse accompany parents and their newborn to the car upon discharge to ensure baby is secured safely in his or her car safety seat and that the seat is buckled properly into the car.

Toddlers, 1-4 years, and at least 20-40 pounds, will most likely be in a convertible car seat. Children this age can legally face forward. However, the Safe Kids Coalition and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that your child remain rear facing as long as possible. The harness straps must be at or above shoulder level and fit snugly. Young children 4-8 years and at least 40 pounds can be placed in a belt positioning booster. Boosters are made for children facing forward only and for those vehicles that have a lap and shoulder belt in the rear seats. The seat belt must fit low and tight across the lap and upper thigh area. The shoulder strap must fit snug across the chest and shoulder. All children under the

age of 12 should ride in the back of the car. Shoulder straps should never be placed under the arm or behind the back when used by children or adults.

Safest Location for Your Car Seat

According to the pediatricians at Boys Town Pediatrics and the AAP, the safest place for your infant is in the rear middle seat, if your car manual approves of this position. Some cars are not equipped for middle car seat installation. Check both your car manual and the car seat manual to determine the safest location for your infant or convertible car seat.

Premature Babies

Guidelines for premature babies and safety seats are different than for babies who are born full-term. The AAP advises against using a convertible safety seat that has a shield because it may be too high and too far away from a premature baby's body to fit properly.



In the days before leaving the hospital, a premature (less than 37 weeks) baby should be monitored by a nurse while buckled in a car seat to be sure his or her heart rate, oxygen intake and breathing are not affected by the semi-reclined position. It may be necessary for your baby to lie flat while traveling home. In this case, your health care provider will recommend using a crash-tested car bed such as the Angel Ride or Ultra Dream Ride.

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Infants with Special Health Care Needs

Some infants with certain health care needs can still ride in standard car safety seats. However, special medical safety seats or restraints may be needed for infants with breathing or muscle control conditions, casts or other health care needs.

If your newborn has special medical needs, talk with your pediatrician or surgeon about how your baby should be positioned and transported. Because special medical safety seats are specially designed, they can be expensive. In some cases, your insurance, or even Medicaid, may cover the cost of special car seats or restraints. For more information on specialized car safety restraint systems, contact the National Safety Council at (402) 896-6454 or the Nebraska Office of Highway Safety at (402) 471-2515.

Keep Baby Restrained at All Times

When taking long trips, be sure to plan enough time to stop periodically to feed, diaper, or provide a temporary change in environment. No matter how hard your child is crying or how uncomfortable he appears, never take your baby out of his or her car seat when the vehicle is moving or at a standstill in traffic.

To comfort your baby or to provide stimulation, Boys Town Pediatrics offers the following suggestions:

Tips for Parents

- Interact with your baby by singing or humming songs or talking to her about your surroundings.
- Keep one or two soft, brightly colored and stimulating toys in the car only so your baby will learn to associate them with quiet travel.
- Keep a favorite comfort item in reach of baby while in the car such as a blanket or stuffed animal.

For additional information on this subject and other baby-related topics, visit www.boystownpediatrics.org.

Rules for Grandparents, Caregivers

Teach other drivers, including grandparents and caregivers, the proper way to restrain your child's safety seat. Be specific on the importance of always abiding by your rules and never taking your child out of his or her safety seat while the vehicle is moving, no matter how fussy your child becomes.

Tips for Parents

- Always send in your car seat recall registration.
- Check your car manual and car seat manual before you install a car seat to determine the safest position for your baby.
- Heavy inserts or jackets should not be placed in safety car seats.
- Avoid using mirrors, shades, headrests or other products that have not been crash tested or approved.
- Drive through safety checkpoints or fitting stations to make sure the car seat is properly fitted for your car.

Websites for Car Seat Safety:

www.nhtsa.dot.gov

www.carseat.org

www.safekids.org



402-498-1234

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