

Trauma Talk



Car Seat Safety Birth Through Adolescence

January 2023

Rear Facing Car Seats

Birth until they outgrow weight/height recommendations on car seat label

■ Infants have big heads and immature spines, putting them at higher risk for head & spinal injuries when not properly secured in a rear facing car seat. Accident research shows that rear facing car seats reduce serious injuries by 92%. (CSFTL.org)

■ **Know your car seat!** A child should remain rear facing in a car seat until they reach the maximum weight or height limited listed on the label. Most convertible seats have limits that permit children to ride rear-facing for 2 or more years. (Safekids.org)

Forward Facing Car Seats

When they outgrow rear-facing seats

■ Continue to use the 5-point harness while forward facing. Straps should come through the car seat above the shoulders, whereas rear facing straps come from below the shoulders.

■ **Fit is important!** Harness should fit snugly around hips and shoulders; you should not be able to pinch the strap when child is buckled in properly. Harness chest clip should sit high on child's chest at armpit level. Winter coats and other bulky clothing will affect fit and function of a car seat.

Booster Seats

When they outgrow forward-facing seat until they can sit with their back against the seat, knees bent at edge of seat & feet flat on the floor

- The car's lap and shoulder belt should fall on top of the legs or low on the hips. Shoulder belt should fit across the chest on the shoulder. If a child will not stay in the seat without the harness, they are not ready for a booster seat.
- **Wear your seatbelt everytime!** Children mimic what they see adults doing. Everyone in the car should wear their seatbelt every time to reinforce proper habits from the start.

Other Important Information

- All car seats involved in an accident should be thrown away and replaced.
- Car seats expire! Check your labels for expiration dates.
- Children younger than 13 years should ride in the rear seats of vehicles and use lap and shoulder seat belts.
- Visit [UCSG.Safekids.org](https://www.UCSG.Safekids.org) for tips on buying, installing, fit and when to change car seats. To contact a local Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician visit [cert.safekids.org](https://www.cert.safekids.org)