

Keep Kids Safe

A Parent's Guide to Car Seats



Choosing and using the right car seat.



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

This booklet tells you how to install and use car seats in your own car, van, truck or SUV.

Please keep in mind that your child should be in a properly installed car seat whenever he or she rides in ANY car.

This includes riding in taxis or in grandparents' or babysitters' cars.

Please note: When we use the word “car” in this booklet, it includes cars, vans, trucks and SUVs.

Choosing and Using the Right Car Seat

Car crashes kill and injure more children than any other cause. When you use the right car seat in the right way, you can reduce the risk that your child will be hurt or killed by 70%. Car seats and booster seats save lives.

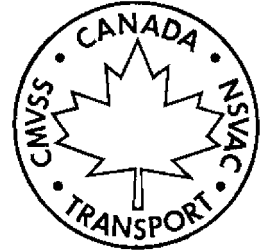
For a car seat to protect your child, you must:

- Use a car seat that meets Transport Canada's safety regulations. A safe seat will have the mark shown to the right.
- If you are using an old or used car seat, check to be sure:
 - has never been in a crash
 - is not older than the manufacturer's expiry date
 - if there is no expiry date stamped in the plastic, call the manufacturer. Most seats can be used for six years.
- Choose the seat that is right for your child's age and size.
- Put the seat in your car the right way.
- Harness your child in the seat correctly every time.

Once you've chosen the right car seat for your child's age and size, you can use the checklists in this booklet to be sure that:

- You put the seat in your car the right way.
- You harness your child into the seat correctly.

The kind of seat children need changes as they grow. Don't be in a rush to move your children from one kind of seat to another. Make sure that they are old enough and big enough to be safe in the new seat.



Look for this safety mark



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

Never ride with a baby or child in your arms or on your lap.

Never leave a child alone in a car.

Objects in the car can fly around and injure people during a crash or sudden stop. Be sure everything in your car is strapped down or stored in the trunk.

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Babies need a Rear-Facing Infant Seat from birth until they are AT LEAST 1 year old **and** weigh AT LEAST 10 kg (22 pounds). Some seats can be used rear-facing until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds).



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Babies must be at least 1 year old, weigh more than 10kg (22 pounds) and should be walking on their own before they move to a forward-facing seat. They must continue to use this seat until they weigh 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs up to 30 kg (65 pounds).



Booster Seat 16

Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a booster seat. A child should also be at least 4 years old. It's safest if children use a booster seat until they are 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall.



Seat Belt 18

Children are ready for a seat belt when they are AT LEAST 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall. They must be tall enough for their legs to bend over the edge of the seat while they are sitting up straight.

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FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

When you buy a car seat:

- **Read and follow the directions that come with your car seat.** Every brand of car seat is a little different. Each will come with an instruction booklet.
- **Send in the registration card** when you buy a car seat. If you do this, the manufacturer can let you know if there are any recalls or problems with the seat.
- **Check with Transport Canada** to see if there are any recalls on the seat you plan to use. You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 20.

The Safest Spot in Your Car



The best spot for your child is in the back seat of your car. Even when your child no longer needs a car or booster seat, your children are safest in the back seat until they are 13.

If your car will allow it, the middle of the back seat is the safest place. The side positions are safe too. In many you can only use the Universal Anchorage System (page 13) in the side positions. Do not place a rear-facing seat in front of an armrest that folds down.

If you must place your child's car seat next to a door, remove all toys, blankets, pillows or other things from the space between the car seat and the door. These could hurt your child if the side airbag inflates.

If you don't have a back seat...

It is **never safe** to install a forward-facing car seat in the front seat if there is no tether anchor for the car seat.

Airbags are dangerous for children.

- It is **never safe** to put a rear-facing infant seat in a seat with an active front air bag.
- If you must put your child in the front seat, turn off the airbag.

To find out if it's okay to use a car seat in the front seat of your car:

- Check your owner's manual
- Call your car's manufacturer
- Call Transport Canada (You'll find contact information for Transport Canada on page 20.)



Remove all toys, blankets, pillows or other things from the space between the car seat and the door.

Types of Car Seats

Infant Seats

Babies need a **rear-facing Infant Seat** from birth until they are at least 1 year old **and** weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds).

Many **convertible car seats** can be used rear-facing until your child weighs 118 kg (40 pounds). Check the label on your seat.



Rear-facing infant car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Child Seats

Babies must be at least 1 year old and weigh more than 10kg (22 pounds) before they can move to a **forward-facing seat**. It is safer to keep your baby in a **rear-facing convertible seat** longer.



Forward-facing convertible car seat

Booster Seats

Children must weigh at least 18 kg (40 pounds) to move to a **booster seat**. A child should also be at least 4 years old. They must use a booster seat until they are 9 years old or 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall. If you use a **backless booster**, make sure the seat in your car is tall enough to protect your child's head.



High-back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using a Rear-Facing Infant Car Seat



Rear-facing infant car seat



Rear-facing convertible car seat

Babies need a rear-facing infant seat from birth until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 10 kg (22 pounds). Rear-facing car seats provide the best protection for your baby's head and neck. Keep your baby rear-facing until your baby is walking on their own, and your baby is older and heavier. Many babies use an infant seat with a handle when they are born, and then move to a convertible seat later. Your baby can sit rear-facing in a convertible seat until they reach the weight limit or height limit printed on the label on the seat. Many seats can be used in the rear-facing position until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds). Check the label on your seat. It is okay for your baby's legs to touch the back of the car.

Rear-facing seats need to be tilted back at an angle of a maximum of 45 degrees to keep your baby's head lying back. Check your car seat manual to learn how to do this.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seatbelt instead.
- Connect the infant car seat to the UAS/LATCH anchors in the car.
- Pull the UAS/LATCH belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.

If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.

If you are using a lap belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with an infant car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the infant car seat or base. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Push down on the infant car seat or base and pull seat belt tight. Push hard. Use your knee.
- Test the seatbelt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.

If you are using a regular seat belt **do not** also use the UAS/LATCH system.



Rear-facing infant seat with a base



UAS/LATCH



Rear-facing infant seat without a base



Push hard. Use your hand or knee.



Locking clip

How to use a locking clip



Squeeze and feed through first slot.



Squeeze and feed through second slot.



Locking clip lies flat and should look like the photo.



Push hard. Use your knee.

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with an infant car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the infant car seat or base and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the infant car seat or base. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible. Not all seatbelts lock. When you pull your seatbelt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten, but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out, it doesn't lock. If your car's seatbelts don't lock, you'll need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place.
- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, use a locking clip. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch). If the top of the seat moves, that is normal.

Sometimes a tight shoulder belt can tilt the infant seat to the side. If this happens, leave the shoulder belt loose. Use a locking clip to lock the lap and shoulder belt in place.

*If you are using a regular seat belt **do not** also use the UAS/LATCH system.*

2. Put your baby in the seat

- The shoulder harness is threaded in the infant car seat as shown in the instructions. Choose the slot that is level with or slightly below your baby's shoulders.
- The chest clip is level with your baby's armpits.
- The shoulder harness stays on the baby's shoulders.
- The harness is snug. You can fit only 1 finger under the harness on your baby's chest.
- The harness stays snug when you pull on it.
- Do not use bunting bags or head-huggers that did not come with the seat. They may not be safe.



One finger under the harness



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE....



Check the instructions to see where the handle of your seat should be when it is in the car. On some seats, the handle must be pushed back. On other seats the handle must remain up. Some handles must be in the rebound position near your baby's feet.

If your infant seat has a canopy, check your instruction booklet. Some canopies must be down when the seat is used in a car.

(Adapted from *Take the Infant Car Seat YES Test*, Calgary Health Region)

Using a Forward-Facing Child Car Seat



Babies must be at least 1 year old, and weigh more than 10kg (22 pounds) before they move to a forward-facing seat. There is no rush. It is safer to keep your baby in a rear-facing convertible seat until your baby is walking on their own, and your baby is older and heavier. Some convertible seats can be used rear-facing until your baby weighs 18 kg (40 pounds). It is okay if your baby's feet are touching the back of the car. When your baby moves to a forward-facing seat, they must continue to use this seat until they weigh 18 kg (40 pounds). Some forward facing car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds).

Before you install the car seat

Put your child in the car seat to see how the harness straps fit. The harness straps should come out of a slot that is level with or a little above your child's shoulders. Your car seat manual will show you how to adjust the harness straps.

1. Put the seat in your car

Cars built after September 2002 have a Universal Anchorage System (UAS/LATCH). If you are using this system:

- Check the Owner's Manual to see how to use the UAS/LATCH system in your car. In most cars you cannot use the UAS in the middle seat. Use the seatbelt instead.
- Connect the car seat to the UAS/LATCH anchors in the car.
- Pull the UAS/LATCH belt tight. The seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Be sure the tether strap is tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is.



UAS/LATCH



Forward-facing child seat

If you are using a UAS/LATCH system **do not** also use the regular seat belt.

If you are using a lap belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a front-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the car seat. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Push down on the car seat or base and pull seat belt tight. Push hard.
- Test the seatbelt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, tighten it again, unbuckle the seat belt, flip the buckle over and buckle it again. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).



Push down on seat and pull tight on belt



Tether anchor



Push hard. Use your knee.



Locking clip

- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Be sure the tether strap is tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. If your car has no anchor, a mechanic may be able to install one.

*If you are using a regular seat belt **do not** also use the UAS/LATCH system.*

If you are using a lap and shoulder belt to hold the car seat:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a seat belt with a forward-facing car seat in your car.
- Put the seat belt through the marked pathway on the car seat or base and buckle it. You'll find the correct pathway in your car seat instruction booklet. Buckle the seat belt.
- Pull the shoulder belt all the way out. You'll hear it click when it reaches the end. Let go of it. As the belt shortens, push **down** on the car seat. Push hard. At the same time, pull **up** on the shoulder belt so that it will lock in place as tightly as possible. Not all seatbelts lock. When you pull your seatbelt all the way out and let it go, it should shorten, but not lengthen again. If it can be pulled out, it doesn't lock. If your car's seatbelts don't lock, you'll need to use a locking clip to keep the car seat in place. See *How to use a locking clip* on page 10.
- Test the seat belt to be sure it stays tight. If the seat belt loosens, use a locking clip. The car seat should not be able to slide side to side more than 2.5 cm (1 inch).
- Hook the tether strap on the car seat to the tether anchor in the car. Be sure the tether strap is tight. If you don't see a tether anchor, your owner's manual will show you where it is. If your car has no anchor, a mechanic may be able to install one.

*If you are using a regular seat belt **do not** also use the UAS/LATCH system.*

2. Put your child in the seat

- The shoulder harness is threaded in the car seat as shown in the instructions. The straps should be level with or just above your child's shoulders.
- The chest clip is level with your child's armpits.
- The shoulder harness stays on the child's shoulders.
- The harness is snug. You can fit only 1 finger under the harness at your child's collarbone.
- The harness stays snug when you pull on it.



One finger under the harness

(Adapted from Take the Child Car Seat YES Test, Calgary Health Region)



Using a Booster Seat



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

When the booster seat is empty, buckle it in place or take it out of your car. A loose booster seat can bounce around in a sudden stop or a crash.



Children can move to a booster seat when they weigh 18 kg (40 pounds). However, there is no rush. It is best to wait until your child is 4 years old or more. Some car seats can be used with harness straps until your child weighs 30 kg (65 pounds). **The law says that children must use a booster until they are 9 years old or 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall.** It's safest if children stay in the booster seat until they are 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall, even if they are older than 9. You need to get a booster seat with a higher weight limit if your child weighs more than the weight limit for your booster seat, but is less than 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall.

Adult seat belts are too big for a child's small body. Booster seats lift children up so that the seat belt fits safely over their body. As well, a child in a booster seat can see out the windows and is happier riding in the car.

Booster Seats can only be used if your car has lap-shoulder belts.

There are two kinds of Booster Seats:

- **High Back:** These seats support the child's head in cars with low-backed seats. Some high back boosters can only be used in tall vehicle seats.
- **Backless:** These have just a seat. They are safe in cars with high-back seats.

Children should use a booster seat until the middle of their ears is above the top of the car's seat or the back of the high-back booster seat. If the child is less than 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall they may need a different booster seat with a higher back.

1. Put the seat in your car:

- Check the Owner's Manual to find out how to use a booster seat in your car.
- Follow the instructions that come with your booster seat.
- Put the booster seat in the back seat of your car.

2. Put your child in the seat

- The shoulder belt crosses the middle of your child's chest. Your child could be hurt or killed if the shoulder belt is behind the child's back or under the arm.
- The lap belt is low and snug over the hips.

(Adapted from Take the Booster Seat YES Test, Calgary Health Region)



High back booster seat



Backless booster seat

Using Seat Belts



FOR SAFETY'S SAKE...

Have your children ride in the back seat. Even after children have outgrown car and booster seats, it's safest if they stay in the back seat until they're 13.

Children should be 13 before they sit in a seat with an active front airbag.



When a child outgrows the height and weight limits of the booster seat, they may be ready to use a regular seat belt. There's no rush to move to a regular seat belt.

**145 cm
(4 ft. 9 in.)**



Children are ready for a seat belt when:

- They are AT LEAST 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) tall or have a seated height of 74 cm (29 in.).
- The lap belt fits low across their hips.
- The shoulder belt fits across the middle of their chest. It should NOT be across the child's neck, behind the back, or under the arm.
- They are tall enough for their legs to bend over the edge of the seat while they are sitting up straight.
- They can sit with their back flat against the seat without slouching.

(Adapted from Take the Booster Seat YES Test, Calgary Health Region)

To Find Out More



For more information and resources on car seat safety:

Child Safety Link, IWK Health Centre

phone: (902) 470-6496 or

1-866-288-1388 (toll free)

e-mail: childsafetylink@iwk.nshealth.ca

website: www.childsafetylink.ca

The Co-operators Insurance: Buckle Up Bears Program

website: <http://www.cooperators.ca/>.

Click on “About Us, Community”, then
“Buckle Up Bears”

Atlantic Car Seat Safety – find us on Facebook.
Post your questions.

For product advisories or recalls of car seats:

Website: www.tc.gc.ca

Search for “Child Restraint Notices”

phone: 1-800-333-0371 (toll free)

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Public Health Services



Partners in Children's Safety

