

Car Seats Save Lives

Things to Remember About Car Seats:

- Harness straps should always be smooth, flat and fit snugly against the child's body.
- Harness straps should be positioned at, or slightly below, the shoulders when rear facing, and at, or slightly above, the shoulders when forward facing.
- The chest clip is a vital part of the harness system and should be secured at armpit level.
- Avoid bulky clothing such as heavy winter coats under car seat harness straps. Bulky layers allow too much slack and movement in a crash. Infants can also become overheated. Use thinner layers and add blankets over the child once they are snugly buckled in.
- Read car seat labels carefully to ensure it fits your child's height and weight.
- Children with special needs can often use standard car seats. If standard car seats are not meeting your child's needs, you can request a car seat evaluation by a trained occupational or physical therapist at CHKD.
- Not all car seats fit in all vehicles, so be sure to read the section on car seat installation in your owner's manual before purchasing a car seat.
- Be sure to read the car seat manufacturer's instructions and keep them with the car seat.
- Complete and return the registration/warranty card for your car seat in case of future recalls.
- Use a Department of Transportation approved car seat that is functioning correctly and has not been altered in any way.
- Don't use a car seat if you don't know its history, if parts are missing, or it has been in an accident.
- Have a professional check the installation of your car seat before your child's first ride. Many fire departments offer this service. Visit CHKD.org/CarSeat for other local inspection stations.

*For more detailed information on car seats,
go to SafeKids.org or NHTSA.gov.*

*Your child's pediatrician should be your primary source of advice
about your child's health.*

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WTG05.2500 • July 2023



In Virginia and North Carolina, child passenger safety laws are designed to protect your most precious cargo. Until age 8, all children must use a properly installed car seat or booster seat that meets federal safety standards. The best safety practice is to continue to use booster seats until children are able to fit in an adult seat belt (at about 4'9" and 80 pounds). This may be between the ages of 8-12. Car seats must be used whenever a child rides in any vehicle, including grandparent's or babysitter's car.

The law also states that drivers are responsible for making sure that children who have outgrown booster seats are properly restrained using the vehicle lap and shoulder belts. If children in a car are not properly secured, a driver can be stopped and given a ticket, even if no other safety violation occurs. Remember, the safest place for all children is in the back seat until they are old enough to drive.

Here's a general guide to selecting the appropriate car seat/safety restraint for your child.

Infant

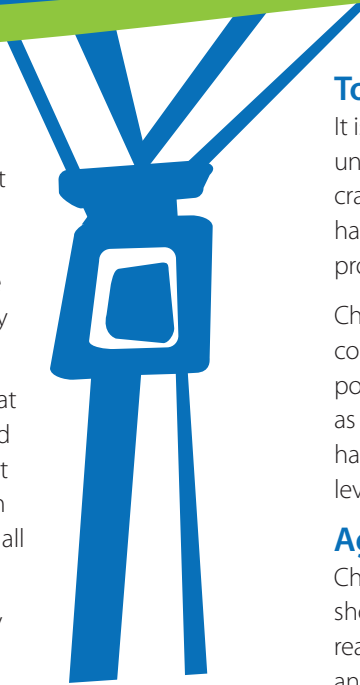
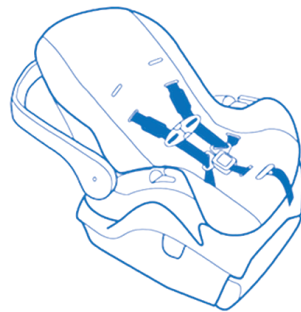
Infants must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are **AT LEAST** 2 years old. This officially became a state law in July of 2019, but has been recommended for many years by safety professionals due to greater crash protection.

Choose an infant-only car seat/carrier or a rear-facing convertible seat that fits your baby by weight and height. The seat must fit in the back seat of the vehicle; it should never be placed in the front seat of a vehicle with passenger-side air bags.

Secure harness straps at or below shoulder level in one of the lowest slots, snugly against the body. The chest clip should be secured at armpit level.

There must be adequate space in the vehicle for the seat to be reclined at the proper angle according to the car seat manual. Newborns should be reclined at a 45 degree angle.

Your baby has outgrown the seat when he exceeds the weight limit or his head is within one inch of the top of the seat.



Toddler (up to age 4)

It is recommended that toddlers remain rear-facing until at least age 2 or older as it provides greater crash protection. Use a convertible car seat that has a rear-facing limit of 40-50 pounds. Rear facing provides greater crash protection.

Children over 2 may ride forward facing in a convertible or forward-facing seat in an upright position. Use a car seat with a harness system for as long as possible (65 pounds max). Secure the harness straps in a forward facing seat at a height level with or slightly above the child's shoulders.

Age 4-12

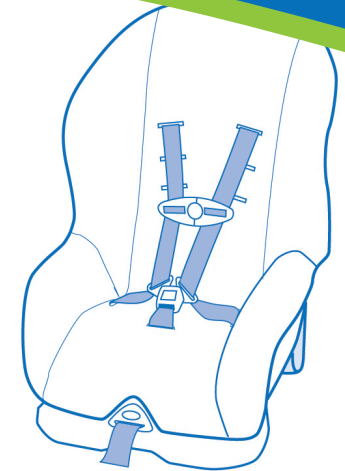
Children who are over 4 years old and 40 pounds should remain in a five-point harness car seat until they reach the upper weight limit for the harness system, and then move into a belt-positioning booster seat. For the best protection, booster seats should be used until the child is 4 feet, 9 inches tall, which is usually at ages 8-12.

High-back boosters may provide better upper body crash protection than the no-back type.

For heavier or taller children who are not ready to sit safely in a booster seat, look for a car seat with a harness crash tested to hold up to 65 pounds, or consult the CHKD special needs car seat program for larger or behaviorally immature children.

Age 8-10+

To ride without a booster seat, children should be tall enough to sit all the way back with knees bent at the edge of the seat and feet on the floor – with the ability to maintain this position at all times. The belt should cross over the child's upper thighs, shoulder, and collar bone. Never allow the child to move the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. If a child is at least 8 years old, and is at least 4 feet 9 inches tall, they should be ready for the vehicle lap and shoulder belts.



The back seat is the safest place for children.

Do not allow children under age 13 to ride in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger-side airbag.