



American Academy of Pediatrics



DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN™

Car Safety Seats — Basic Guidelines

Each year, thousands of young children are killed or injured in car crashes. You can help keep this from happening to your child by using car safety seats and seat belts correctly on every single trip you take. Here are some helpful tips.

Which Car Safety Seat Is the Best?

No one seat is the "best" or "safest." The best seat is the one that fits your child's size, is correctly installed and is used properly every time you drive. When shopping for a car safety seat, keep the following in mind:

- Don't decide by price alone. A higher price does not mean the seat is safer or easier to use. All car safety seats available for sale in the United States must meet government safety standards.
- When you find a seat you like, try it out. Put your child in it and adjust the harnesses and buckles. Make sure it fits properly and securely in your car.
- Keep in mind that pictures or displays of car safety seats may not show them being used the right way.

Important Safety Rules

- Always use a car safety seat. Start with your baby's first ride home from the hospital.
- Never place a child in a rear-facing car safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger air bag.
- All children younger than 13 years are safest in the back seat.
- Be a good role model — always wear your seat belt. This will help your child form a lifelong habit of buckling up.
- Remember that each car safety seat is different. Read and keep the instructions that came with your seat handy, and follow them at all times.
- Read your car owner's manual for information about installing your car safety seat.

If you need help installing your car safety seat, contact a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician. To locate a child safety seat inspection station and set up an appointment, call toll-free at 1-866-SEATCHECK (1-866-732-8243) or visit www.seatcheck.org.

Car Safety Seats and Shopping Carts

Many infant-only car safety seats lock into shopping carts and many stores have shopping carts with built-in infant seats. This may seem safe, but thousands of children are hurt every year from falling out of shopping carts or from the carts tipping over. Instead of placing your baby's car safety seat on the cart, consider using a stroller or front pack while shopping with your baby.

Always Read and Follow Manufacturer's Instructions

If you do not have the manufacturer's instructions for your car safety seat, write or call the company's customer service department. A representative will ask you for the model number, name of seat and date of manufacture. The manufacturer's address and phone number are on the label on the seat.

All products listed below meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213 as of the date of publication. There may be car safety seats available that are not listed. The following information is current as of the date of publication. Before buying a car safety seat, check the manufacturer's instructions for important safety information about proper fitting and use.

Related Articles

- [Medem Learning Center: Car Safety Seats](#)
- [Car Safety Seats — Basics for Correct Usage](#)
- [Car Safety Seats — Common Questions](#)
- [Car Safety Seats — Resource List](#)