



## Car Seat Safety

### *Pediatric Patient Education Handout*

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## Choose the Right Seat for Your Child

### Infants & Toddlers

- Rear-facing in a car seat as long as possible, at least until at least age 2, and preferably until they reach the maximum height or weight allowed by the seat

### Preschool & School-Age Children

- Use a forward-facing seat with a harness once they outgrow rear-facing
- Keep the harness until they reach the seat's maximum limits

### Booster-Age Children

- Use a belt-positioning booster seat once they outgrow the harness
- Booster is needed until the seat belt fits correctly, usually ages 8–12 and about 4'9" (57 inches) tall

### Teens

- Always use a seat belt
- Lap belt low across the hips, shoulder belt across the chest
- Back seat is safest for teens until at least age 13

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## Proper Car Seat Use

- Install seats in the back seat
- Follow both car seat and vehicle instructions
- Car seat should not move more than 1 inch side-to-side or front-to-back
- Harness straps should be snug (no slack)
- Chest clip at armpit level
- No bulky coats under harness straps

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## Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Turning forward-facing too soon
- Using a booster before the seat belt fits
- Loose harness straps
- Using expired or recalled car seats
- Installing without checking instructions

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## Cold Weather Tip

- Buckle your child without a bulky coat
- Place the coat or blanket over the harness after buckling

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## Need Help?

**Free car seat safety checks are available:**

- Local fire departments
- Police stations
- Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs)

**Find a technician at [cert.safekids.org](https://cert.safekids.org)**

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## Remember

**The safest car seat is one that fits your child, fits your vehicle, and is used correctly every time.**

If you have questions about car seat safety, talk with your pediatric provider.