

A Guide to Car Seat Safety

The Importance of Safety

Motor vehicle injuries are the number one cause of death for children from birth to 18 years old. Proper use of car seats and seat belts reduces serious and fatal injuries by more than 50 percent.

The Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety law passed in April of 2008 requires children to ride in a federally approved child passenger restraint that is properly fastened and secured until they are 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall.

The long-term goal of the Car Seat Program at Boston Children's Hospital is that every child leaving Children's in a motor vehicle is properly restrained in a car seat. For more information, call the Car Seat Program at 617-355-7332.

Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well

Car Seat Program
350 Longwood Avenue, Boston, MA 02115
617-355-7332
bostonchildrens.org/injury
injurypreventionprogram@childrens.harvard.edu

Infants

Under one year or less than 20 lbs.



- ⚠️ Infants must be secured in rear-facing seats until they are 2 years old or until they reach the maximum height and weight limit recommended by the car seat manufacturer.
- ⚠️ In rear-facing seats, the harness straps must be secured at or below the shoulders. The harness clip must be secured across the child's chest at armpit level.
- ⚠️ The harness straps must be snug; only one finger should fit under the harness strap at the collarbone.
- ⚠️ Never place an infant seat in the front passenger seat. In the event of a car crash, an air bag could severely injure or kill an infant in a rear-facing seat.

Toddlers

Over one year and more than 20 lbs.



- ⚠️ A child may be moved into the forward-facing position when he or she is 2 years of age or has reached the maximum rear-facing limit on the car seat.
- ⚠️ Forward-facing car seats must be in the upright position.
- ⚠️ The harness straps must be secured at or above the child's shoulders. The harness clip must be secured across the child's chest at armpit level.
- ⚠️ The harness straps must be snug; only one finger should fit under the harness strap at the collarbone.

Booster seats



- ⚠️ Belt-positioning booster seats are generally used for children between 4 and 8 years old, who weigh between 40 and 80 pounds. All children who have graduated from front-facing seats must be in a booster seat until they are 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall, according to Massachusetts law.
- ⚠️ Children must use a lap and shoulder belt while riding in a booster seat.
- ⚠️ Booster seats help a seat belt fit your child properly; the shoulder belt will go across the child's shoulder instead of the neck, and the lap belt will go across the hips and not the stomach.
- ⚠️ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children 12 years of age and under sit in the rear seat of the vehicle and use an appropriate car seat or a lap and shoulder belt.

Safety belt fit test

A child is ready to use a lap and shoulder belt when he or she can:

- ⚠️ sit all the way back against the vehicle seat;
- ⚠️ comfortably bend their knees at the edge of the seat;
- ⚠️ wear the shoulder belt comfortably but firmly across their shoulder, between the neck and the arm;
- ⚠️ wear the lap belt comfortably but firmly over their hips;
- ⚠️ remain in this position for the entire trip.

Special-needs car seats

Car beds are designed for infants who, for medical reasons, must travel lying down. When positioning an infant in a car bed, the infant's head must be facing the center of the vehicle away from the side door.

The Hippo convertible seat from Snuggly Inc. is designed for infants and toddlers in hip casts, including hip spica casts, broomstick casts and fixed splints. It is used rear-facing for children from 5 to 33 pounds and forward-facing from 20 to 65 pounds. The weight of the cast must be included in the child's weight.

For children unable to use a Hippo seat, the E-Z-ON[®] Vest from E-Z-ON Products Inc. offers an alternative. There are two types of E-Z-ON Vests. The E-Z-ON Upright Vest is designed for use by children who have behavioral conditions or poor trunk control. The Modified E-Z-ON Vest is designed for children who must travel lying down.

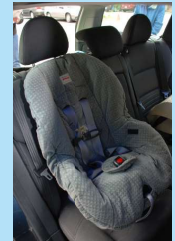
Visit bostonchildrens.org/injury for more information. Car seat information for families living in states other than Massachusetts is available at lihs.org/laws/childrestraint.aspx.

Maintenance and installation of ALL seats

Car seats should be installed using the LATCH (lower anchors and tethers for children) or the vehicle seat belt. Vehicles manufactured after September 2002 have the LATCH installed in at least two positions in the rear.

Car seats should only be used for six years from the date of manufacture. The date of manufacture, model number and type can be found on a label on the car seat. Parents should be advised to send in their registration cards or register their seat online in case the car seat is recalled.

For more information on where you can get your car seat installed, call Boston Children's Car Seat Program at 617-355-7332, email injurypreventionprogram@childrens.harvard.edu or visit bostonchildrens.org/injury.



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QTY: 500
Size: 4x9 folded; with bleeds
28x9 flat; with bleeds
Double-sided
Z-fold