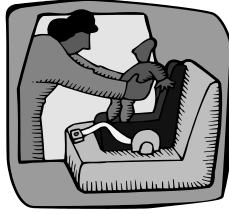


Car Seat Guidelines for Children

Motor vehicle crashes are among the leading causes of death for children ages 3 to 14 years!



What are the seat rules for infants and toddlers?

Choose a seat that fits your child and can be properly installed in your vehicle. Vehicles produced after 2002 may come with the LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) system used to secure car safety seats. Reputably sold safety seats have been tested to conform to government standards. Children should be in a five-point harness system until they reach the weight or height limit of the seat.

Most Important Criteria - Height, Weight, Fit & Seat Instructions

Infants **MUST** ride in a rear facing seat until they reach 2 years of age. You should be in compliance with seat instructions for height, weight, & fit. Use your seat's instructions to guide you – we do not make concrete recommendations based on age as children of the same age often differ in weight & height.

Rear-facing seats have been proven to offer more support & be safer during crashes, but please be careful – do not reach around, while driving, to tend to your child who may be upset or fussing. A child should be considered to have outgrown rear facing seats when they have reached the seat limit or the top of their head is less than one inch from the top of seat.

Forward facing seats typically have a weight limit on the harness system of 40 lbs. A child is too tall for this type when the tops of his/her shoulders are higher than the top harness slots.

Booster seats, in conjunction with adult lap & shoulder belts, should be used when a child outgrows a forward facing seat. If your seat converts to a booster, you must remove the harness system when the weight or height limit is reached.

What is the safety belt law in Massachusetts?

The Booster Seat Bill, an enhancement of the Massachusetts Child Passenger Safety Law, became effective as of July 10, 2008. The law requires that all children riding in passenger motor vehicles be in a federally approved child passenger restraint until 8 years of age or over 57 inches tall (4'9").

Children are considered to have outgrown their booster seats when either of these requirements are met, and can use the adult seat belt in the back seat. All children younger than 13 years should ride in the back seat.

Proper fit for the adult safety belt:

- Sit with their back and hips against the vehicle seat back and sit without slouching
- Bend their knees easily over the front edge of the seat and keep their feet flat on the floor
- Safely wear the seat belt - lap belt low/snug across the hips, shoulder belt across mid-chest & shoulder
- Use the properly adjusted vehicle head restraint

- Remain in this position for the entire ride

What NOT to do...!

- NEVER place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an airbag.
- NEVER place a shoulder belt behind the back or under the arm.
- NEVER let your child ride unrestrained. A police officer may stop your vehicle if a child under age 12 years is not properly restrained.
- NEVER let a child 12 years or younger ride in the front seat.
- Avoid used seats if you do not know the seat's history. Seats should not be re-used if they have visible cracks, were in use during a motor vehicle accident, are missing the instruction booklet (you need to be able to check for recalls), or is missing parts. Seats usually have an expiration date.
- NEVER be a poor role model. Create a lifelong habit of buckling up by showing your child that adults buckle up while riding!
- NEVER leave your child alone in or around cars.

Where can I find more information?

Review your child's safety seat & vehicle manufacturers' instruction booklet. For help, find a Child Passenger Safety Technician.

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx

[Child Passenger Safety Hotline](#)

1-877-392-5956 or www.mass.gov/childsafetyseats

[NHTSA's Child Car Seat Inspection Station Locator](#)

www.nhtsa.gov/cps/cpsfitting/index.cfm

[Safe Kids Technician Locator](#)

<http://cert.safekids.org/>

[NHTSA's Child Safety Seat Recall List](#)

www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/recalls/childseat.cfm