

# Car Safety for Babies and Young Children

Anne Arundel County  
Department of Health

Anne Arundel County  
Healthy Babies Coalition

Revised 6/10

Car Safety for Babies and Young Children

## Presentation Overview

### This presentation will teach you:

- Types of car seats and how to choose one for your child's needs.
- Tips to help install a car seat correctly.
- Resources for help with car seat installation.
- Safety warnings for used car seats.
- Other tips for preventing motor vehicle injuries.

Presentation Overview

## Why Use a Car Safety Seat?

- Car Safety Seats:
  - Are 71% effective in reducing infant deaths.
  - Reduce the need for hospitalization by 69%.
- It's the law.

Car seats are the only way to keep children safe in cars, because a car's lap and shoulder belts are made for adults.

Child safety seats help minimize the force of the crash—spreading the crash force on the strongest parts of the child's body.

Provide protection for the child's head, neck, and spinal column

Protect the child from ejection or collision

## Prevent Injuries from Motor Vehicle Crashes

- Always use a child car safety seat correctly.
  - Read car seat manual.
  - Read child restraint section in vehicle owner's manual.
- Install car seats in the rear seat of the vehicle.
  - The center is the safest location.
  - If the vehicle does not have a back seat, deactivate the passenger airbag.

Use car seats for every ride! Children complain less when they know they must be buckled in every time.

Children riding in the front seat are 40% more likely to be hurt in a crash than those riding in the back seat.

Children under the age of 13 should always ride in the back seat.

## Use the Correct Type of Car Seat

### For babies:

- The car seat should face the back of the car until the baby reaches the rear-facing weight limit of the seat.
- At minimum, babies must be one year old and 20 pounds before facing forward.

Correct Type of Car Seat

## Use the Correct Type of Car Seat

- Two types of car seats for babies:



Infant carrier



Convertible car seat  
(can be rear or forward-facing)

Many new infant carriers can be used until a child reaches 30 pounds.

Pick a car seat that has a high rear-facing weight limit.

When cost is a concern, convertible car seats may offer the most value because they can be used both for newborns and for older babies.

## Convertible Car Seats



**Rear-facing**



**Forward-facing**

Note that for rear-facing car seats, it is mainly the weight of the baby that dictates when the car seat can be turned around, not the baby's height or the length of the legs. The only exception is in the (rare) situation if the baby still weighs less than the rear-facing weight limit of the seat, but the ears are higher than the top of the car seat.

## Why Rear Facing?

- It is the safest position.
- It supports the head, neck and back.
- The seat cradles and moves with the child, reducing stress to the neck and spinal cord.
- It protects underdeveloped bones and muscles.



Think of it like a catcher's glove which will support and move with your child's head and spine.

Forward facing too soon increases the likelihood of serious injury or death to the child involved in a frontal collision.

## Use the Correct Type of Car Seat

### **For children over one year and at least 20 pounds**

- Can use a forward-facing car seat.
- Use until the child reaches the seat's maximum height or weight limit.
- Later, some of these seats can be used as booster seats with the car's lap/shoulder belt.

Correct Type of Car Seat

## Use the Correct Type of Car Seat

- Two types of car seats for older babies:



**Convertible car seat  
(in forward facing position)**



Slots for the  
car's lap and  
shoulder belt.

**Combination forward-  
facing and booster seat**

Combination forward-facing and booster seats can be used for toddlers and young school-aged children.

## Car Seat Installation Tips

- **Use the correct belt path.**
- **Install the seat tightly.**
  - Should not move more than an inch from side to side or front to back.
- **Harness straps should be snug.**
  - Should not be able to pinch straps.
- **Harness clip should be at the level of the armpits.**



Harness straps

Convertible seats have two belt paths: one for rear facing and the other for forward facing.

There are different slots for the harness straps. As the baby grows, the straps will have to be moved to higher slots. Check the car seat manual for instructions for the correct slot.

## Install Car Seats Correctly

- Need help? Go to a designated car seat fitting station.
  - ***For FREE car seat inspection locations, call Maryland Kids in Safety Seats at 1-800-370-7328 or go online [mdkiss.org](http://mdkiss.org).***

Most car seats are installed incorrectly – that is why it is important to read the owners manual. There are car seat inspection locations to help with installation.

## Caution - Used Car Seats

- Do not buy or borrow a used car seat if:
  - It is over 6 years old.
  - It has been in a crash.
  - You don't know the history!
- Get the car seat manual.
- All car seats that have been in a crash should be replaced immediately.

The plastics and other parts in car seats can wear out over time. That is why car seats over 6 years old should not be used.

Car seat manuals can usually be obtained online from the car seat manufacturer.

## Use Car Seats Safely

- Do not let a baby sleep alone in a car seat.
- Be careful when using infant carriers outside the vehicle.
  - Do not put the carriers on furniture.
  - Use care when attaching carriers to shopping carts.



If you choose to use an infant carrier outside of the car (e.g. in a restaurant, at home), do not put on top of furniture like beds, tables, countertops, etc. When a baby moves, the seat can shift and become unstable causing it to tip over and fall with the baby still strapped inside. It is safest to put the baby on the ground, out of people's way.

Infant carriers are often used on top of shopping carts. Not all infant carriers can securely attach to all shopping carts.

## Prevent Motor Vehicle Injuries

- **Projectiles**

- Secure all loose items in the car.

- **Back-over injuries**

- When backing up, make sure a child is not behind the car.

- **Severe heat injuries**

- NEVER leave a child in a car alone, even for a moment.
- Always check that your child is not left in the car.
- Cars can heat up quickly—over 120°F even in mild weather!
- Even if the windows are cracked, the child could easily overheat.

Prevent being hit with a flying item (projectile) during a crash by securing items in the vehicle. Use vehicle pockets or trunks to secure potential projectiles. Open back vehicles (minivans, SUVs, wagons, hatchbacks) should use bungee cords to tie down loose items, including strollers and groceries.

Back-over injuries are those that occur when a car in reverse and usually at low speed runs over a child who is too small to be seen easily in the rear-view or side-view mirrors. This is especially problematic with larger SUVs but is an issue with any type of vehicle.

Some people have forgotten that their child is in the car with them, especially when the baby is in a rear-facing car seat. Put your purse, wallet or other important items in a secured location in the backseat as a reminder.

Severe overheating injuries means heat exhaustion and heat stroke—both very serious conditions that could lead to death. The basic idea to convey here is that cars can get very hot very quickly (under an hour). When the body is exposed to very hot temperatures, it is no longer able to regulate the body temperature and can overheat. Body temperatures over 104°-105°F are quite dangerous and at 106°-107°F, body functions begin to shut down, coma ensues and there is an extremely high risk of death.

## For More Information

- **Maryland Kids in Safety Seats (MD KISS)**  
1-800-370-SEAT (7328) or [www.mdkiss.org](http://www.mdkiss.org)
- **National Safe Kids Campaign**  
202-662-0600 or [safekids.org](http://safekids.org)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics  
Injury Prevention Program**  
[www.aap.org/family/tippmain.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/tippmain.htm)

For More Information



Questions