

Most of us Make Mistakes with Carseat Safety...

by Monica Hamburg, MD

The Five Points:



Age

1	Rear-Facing	
2		
3		
4	Front-Facing	
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7	Booster Seat	
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10	Back Seat Shoulder/Lap Belt	
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Rearfacing Infant Seats Now Recommended to age 2...

Automobile crashes are one of the leading causes of death and disability in children, and yet, unknowingly, about **three out of four parents** strap their children into safety seats and devices incorrectly! Parents can dramatically decrease their child's risk of serious injury by following the guidelines recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. These are the recommended seats and positions for your child:

Babies: Most parents know newborns should be facing backwards and restrained in a car seat with a **5-point harness**, but did you know that your baby should continue to face backwards until at least 2 years old? Past recommendations were to face your baby forward at 12 months but further testing has shown that the safest position for the youngest children is rear facing. The AAP now recommends trying to keep your child rear facing as long as possible. Some toddler's size prevents them from facing backwards if their length and weight exceed the car seat manufacturer's recommendations, but **NEVER** face an infant forward under a year of age.

Buckling errors: Many babies are in the correct type of car seat but are not buckled correctly. The chest clip should be sitting at the *level of the armpits*, not lower. Shoulder straps should fit snugly, so you can only fit one finger between the strap and your child. Further, babies should not be buckled in while wearing heavy winter coats. The fluffy air in the coat means the seatbelts are not tight enough. Always *remove heavy winter coats* prior to buckling.

TODDLERS/PRESCHOOLERS:

Use a forward facing 5-point harness infant or booster car seat.

Booster seats: Many booster seats are designed for ages 4 and older, but always read the age, height and weight requirements for the specific seat you are buying. Keep in mind that boosters with high backs and head rests are a good idea for younger children who tend to fall asleep in the car so they don't slump into a dangerous position. Older children should continue to use boosters. They must use a booster until the shoulder belt sits on them correctly without the booster, which usually occurs between age 8 and age 12 and **when the child is 4'9"**.

SCHOOLAGE/TWEENS: All children should ride in the back seat. **No child under age 13 should ride in the front seat.** Children should always use both a lap belt and cross-shoulder belt. The shoulder belt should sit across your child's chest. If it lies across his neck or face continue using a booster seat.

Take a look at: www.safercar.gov for more information...