

Child Passenger Safety Fact Sheet

The best way to protect a child from serious injury or death in a car crash is to make sure they are properly restrained and in the correct restraint for their weight, height and age.

Putting safety over convenience in a vehicle will help parents protect their children.

Minnesota Law

- Rear-facing child seats - Newborns to at least 1 year and 20 pounds.
- All children must be in a child restraint until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall, or at least age 8, whichever comes first.

Child Seat Recommendations

- It is safest to keep a child rear-facing as long as possible. When a child is rear facing, the force of the crash is more evenly distributed through the whole area of the child's back, head and neck.
- Forward-facing car seats - Age 2 until around age 4. It's preferable to keep children in a harnessed restraint until they reach the maximum weight limit.
- Bulky winter clothing can negatively impact how a child fits in their car seat. The five-point harness should be snug and the retainer clip should be across the chest at armpit level. Improper fit can contribute to ejection from the vehicle, serious injury or death in traffic crashes.
- Booster seats - Use after outgrowing a forward-facing harnessed restraint. It's safest to remain in a booster until 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- Due to the force when an airbag deploys, children should not sit in the front seat until the age of 13. Even then, extend the distance between the child and the air bag, (adjusting the seat all the way back), and never place your feet on the dash.

Parent's Responsibility

- Be an attentive driver. Avoid all distractions, including putting the cell phone out of sight while driving. Pull over to a safe area if you must take a phone call or attend to your child.
- Be a role model for safety. Always buckle up and make sure children are properly buckled before starting the vehicle.
- Keep your car free of clutter. In a crash, everything loose in your car has the potential to fly and, depending on the speed of the crash, even small items are dangerous.
- Drive sober. If you are planning on having even one drink, make sure you have a designated driver.
- Fight the pressure. Don't let your children pressure you into moving out of a booster seat or into the front seat before they are ready.

Booster Seat Fitting

- A child's legs should bend at the edge of the seat when his or her back and bottom are against the vehicle seat back.
- The shoulder belt should go over their chest, not the neck.
- The lap belt should fit snugly across the hips or upper thighs, NOT across the face or neck.
- If a seat belt is fitting across the neck of a child who is out of a booster seat, parents should consider using a booster seat until the belt fits properly across the chest.
- A child is ready to ride in a seat belt alone when they can sit with their back against the vehicle seat, knees bent completely over the seat and feet touching the floor.

Picking out the Right Car Seat

- The best seat is the seat that fits not only your vehicle but your child. There is no one seat that is best.
- It's recommended that parents choose a rear facing seat with a relatively high weight and height limit.

For more information go to: Buckleupkids.mn.gov