

Car Seat Facts

- Kids under one year old **ALWAYS** should ride rear facing, even if they can sit up or stand by themselves, and even if they are over 20 lbs! Before 1yo, the baby's neck muscles and bones aren't strong enough to withstand a car crash when forward facing, which often results in spinal damage. So it is extremely important to keep your baby rear facing till his first birthday.
- Almost all kids under nine years old should still be in a booster. Most people think that once a kid outgrows their convertible car seat, at 40 lbs, they can go to a normal seat belt now. Most kids seem to have reached the right size for the adult seat belt at 9yo. This is what CDC says on the issue: "Children do not fit in adult lap/shoulder belts without a booster seat until they are 58 inches tall and weigh 80 lbs. Children should ride in a booster seat from the time they graduate from their forward-facing CSS until approximately age 8 years or until are tall enough for the knees to bend over the edge of the seat when the child's back is resting firmly against the seat back." (from Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Review, available at www.cdc.gov)

The 5-Step Test

Did you know most children need boosters from about age 4 till at least age 8? If your child is NOT riding in a booster, try this 5-step test. (Provided by SafetyBelt USA)

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
3. Is the lap belt below the tummy, touching the thighs?
4. Is the shoulder belt centered on the shoulder and chest?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, your child needs a booster seat to ride safely in the car. Riding in a booster is more comfortable, too!

- A five point harness is the safest type of harness on car seat or booster. There are 5 points where the harness is connected to the seat, 2 above the shoulders, 2 next to the hips and one between the legs. A 5-point harness has several advantages for a forward-facing child. The straps are placed on the child's shoulders and low on the hips, so that crash forces are absorbed by the strongest parts of the child's body instead of the soft abdomen. If the child is husky, a T-shield may press on chubby thighs, while a tray shield may squeeze the tummy. In smaller cars, it may be hard to remove the child if the tray shield cannot be raised up completely.
- Using seatbelt adjuster clips to make the shoulder / lap belts better fitting, interferes with the effectiveness of the belt. The NHTSA (Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Admin.) conducted a study that found these clips produced some degradation in the performance of the lap/shoulder belt system.
- Use the top slots if you use a convertible car seat forward facing. Even if the middle ones seem to fit better. This is because the top ones are the only ones which are reinforced and can withstand a crash in the forward facing position. If you use the middle or lower slots, the harness can rip through the plastic, possibly allowing the child to be ejected from the seat.