Car Seat Safety

SAFE KIDS
SOUTH CAROLINA

Best Practices

Best practice is the gold standard of protection (while following car seat manufacturer instructions and the state law).

1. Choose car seat based on child's age, height, weight and developmental level.
2. Use a car seat that fits your vehicle, your child and that you can install and use correctly every time.
3. Ensure car seat is installed correctly as directed by the vehicle and car seat instruction manuals.
4. Children under 13 years of age should ride in the back seat away from the frontal air bag.

Inspection Stations

Did you know **46%** of car seats and booster seats are used incorrectly?

To ensure you are using your seat correctly, visit **dph.sc.gov/carseats** to find a certified child passenger safety technician at a local inspection station.

Source:
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

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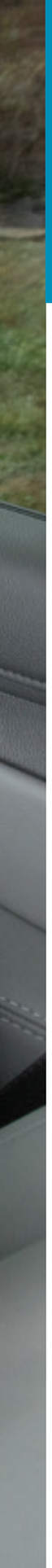

Rear-facing Car Seats

Rear-facing is the safest way for a child to be transported; therefore, children should remain rear-facing as long as the car seat's height and weight limits allow.

- The child's back and bottom should be flat against the car seat.
- The harness straps should be flat, not twisted, and situated just below the top of the child's shoulders.
- The harness should be buckled properly, and the chest clip should be at armpit level on the child.
- There should be no excess webbing at the shoulder once the harness is tightened.
- The car seat should be locked and tightened with a seat belt or lower anchor connectors.
- The car seat should be adjusted according to the recline-angle indicator.

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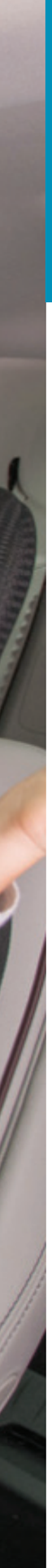

Forward-facing Car Seats

Children who are at least 2 years old and have exceeded the height or weight limits for their rear-facing seat can transition to a forward-facing car seat. Children should remain in a harness until they reach the maximum weight or height limit of their five-point harness.

- The harness straps should be flat, not twisted, and situated just above the top of the child's shoulders.
- There should be no excess webbing at the shoulder once the harness is tightened.
- The harness should be buckled properly, and the chest clip should be positioned at the armpit level.
- **Now that your child is in a forward-facing car seat the top tether strap should be used.**
- The car seat should be locked and tightened with a seat belt or lower anchor connectors.

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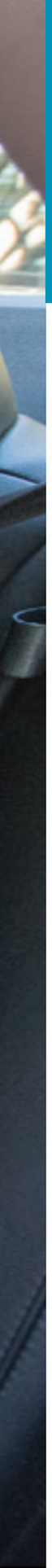
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



Booster Seats

Children who have outgrown their forward-facing car seat's weight or height limits and are at least 4 years old can use a booster seat.

- Booster seats are designed to be used with the vehicle lap-and-shoulder belt.
- While booster seats often are less expensive and easier to use, these types of seats are commonly not utilized.
- Booster seats are important because they allow children to fit adult seat belts properly.
- Remember to secure the booster seat in the vehicle with a seat belt when it is not in use. This way it will not become a projectile in a crash.

Source:
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Seat Belts

A child that is at least 8 years old or at least 57 inches tall can use an adult safety belt if the child can be secured properly.

When transitioning a child to a lap-and-shoulder belt in the back seat of a vehicle, consider the following questions:

- Can they keep their back against the vehicle seat without slouching down?
- Can they comfortably keep their knees bent over the edge of the vehicle seat?
- Can they keep their feet flat on the floor?
- Does the lap belt lie low across their hips and not on their stomach?
- Does the shoulder belt lie across the shoulder and not across their neck or face?
- Can the child stay in position for the entire ride?

If the answer is no to any of these questions, then the child should remain in a booster seat.

Remember: Children under 13 years of age should ride in the back if a back seating position is available.

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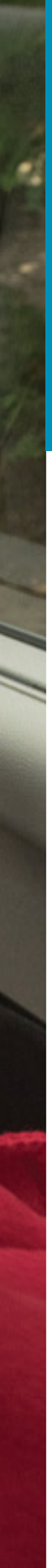
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



Risk of Wearing Coats and Bulky Clothes

Children should not wear coats or bulky clothes while harnessed in a car seat because this interferes with the snugness of the harness.

If you're worried about your child being cold while in the vehicle, you can:

- Adjust your child's harness to fit properly while it is off and put the coat on the child backwards.
- For children over the age of 1, keep the child warm by covering them with a blanket after they are harnessed in the car seat properly.

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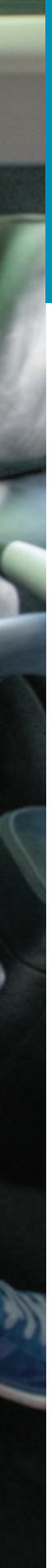
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



A.C.T. to Prevent Heatstroke

Leaving a child alone in a vehicle can lead to serious injury or death from heatstroke. Help reduce the number of deaths from heatstroke by remembering to A.C.T.

1. **Avoid** heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in a vehicle.
2. **Create** reminders for yourself. Place your phone or purse in the backseat when traveling with your child. Or keep a stuffed animal or another visual reminder in the front seat when your child is in the back seat of your vehicle.
3. **Take action**. Call 911 if you see a child alone in a vehicle.

Source:
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Car Seat Expiration Dates and Recalls

Example of a manufacturer label from Chicco car seat

Car seat expiration dates vary between manufacturers and models, but most expire after 6-10 years. Once a car seat expires, the harness straps should be cut so it can no longer be used and should be disposed of.

Remember to register your car seat for recalls.

- You can visit the car seat manufacturer's website to register your seat or mail the registration card that comes with the seat to the manufacturer.

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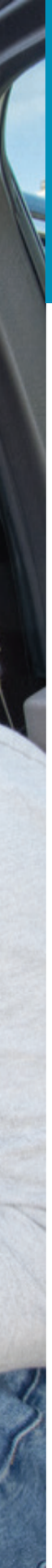

Helpful Tips

- Contact the car seat manufacturer to determine if a car seat can still be used after it has been involved in a crash.
- Secure loose objects in a place like your trunk so they do not become projectiles inside the vehicle.
- Visit **scdhec.gov/carseats** to find a list of inspection stations around South Carolina. At each one of these locations listed, there is at least one certified child passenger safety technician that can check if your car seat is properly installed.

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