

Keeping Safe On The Road

Transportation Safety:

Using safety belts and car seats correctly saves lives.

Using the appropriate car seat for children is important. A seat that is too small or too big won't protect them from injury. Buy a seat that carries a label saying it conforms to all federal motor safety standards. Don't buy the seat if the instructions or the Department of Transportation label is missing.

Appropriate seats are:

*** For newborns:** Rear-facing and in the back of the car. The seat shouldn't move more than one inch in any direction. When the baby can't support his head, you may need to put rolled towels around his head to keep it from flopping from side to side. Adjust the harness so you can only fit one finger underneath the straps at his collarbone. The chest clip should be even with his armpits. Never place an infant in a rear-facing seat in front of an air bag. The child's head could be positioned to receive the maximum force of impact from an air bag.

***For toddlers** at least 20 pounds to 40 pounds: Front-facing and in the back of the car. Straps of the car seat should go over your child's shoulder. The same one finger rule and armpit placement apply. Do not exceed manufacturer's height recommendations.

*** For small children** 40 pounds to 70 pounds: Booster seats, once your child's outgrown her toddler seat. Make sure lap belt is across your child's hips and not across soft tissue (like stomach), Shoulder belt shouldn't cross face or front of neck. Follow manufacturer's instructions.

*** For kids** 70 pounds or more: Booster seat until the child is tall enough to sit with knees bent at the edge of the seat. Make sure the seat belt fits properly. Never let children put the safety belt shoulder portion behind themselves or under the arm.

The newest child safety seats that began production in September 1999 attach to the vehicle with a top tether strap to help fasten the seat more securely and reduce potential head injuries. Car manufacturers will be changing designs to have a new child restraint attachment system.

Never:

- * tuck the safety belt of a car behind your child.
- * hold a child on your lap: You could crush her in a collision.
- * belt two people with the same safety belt.
- * move off in a vehicle until everyone is safely buckled, even if just going down the street.
- * ride in the cargo part of a vehicle. You can get thrown out, even if you're under a canopy.