

Child Passenger Safety

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if my infant is positioned correctly?

Infants under 20 pounds and less than one year old - no matter which child restraint used - must face the rear of the car at no more than a 45 degree recline. The position allows the baby's back to absorb the force in a collision rather than the chest or abdomen.

What type of seat should my child be in?

Children under 20 pounds and under 1 year of age must ride in a rear facing child restraint. It is safest to keep your child rear facing until the upper rear facing weight limit of their seat. Appropriate restraints are rear facing only infant seats or rear facing convertible seats. Some convertibles allow children to stay rear-facing up to 35 pounds.

Children over 1 year and over 20 pounds who have outgrown their rear-facing seats need to be in a forward-facing car seat with a harness system until at least 40 pounds. Some newer forward-facing seats allow children to stay in harness for longer.

Once a child is over 40 pounds, they can safely use the seat belt with a booster seat. A booster seat protects children from serious abdominal injury in the event of a crash. Children should use a booster up until they are 4' 9" tall. Children under 4 years old who have reached 40 pounds, may be better protected in a harness seat with a higher weight limit.

How do I know if the harness is used correctly?

The harnesses should fit snugly on the child. If there is a harness retainer clip (the piece that connects the harnesses near the chest area), that piece should be adjusted so it rests against the child's chest. Loose harnesses can result in ejection in the event of a crash.

How do I know if the seat belt is routed properly in the car seat ?

The instruction manual will let you know for sure which route the belt should go through. This is usually only an issue on convertible seats which generally have two routes for the seat belt. When the seat is installed forward-facing, use the higher slots located near the seat back. When rear-facing, the slots are closer the front of the seat, and the belt will probably run underneath the part the child sits on. Seat belts placed incorrectly may allow the car seat to fly forward or move out of position, injuring your child.

Is it okay if the tether strap is not used?

The tether strap is for forward-facing seats only. If your car seat has a tether strap and your vehicle is equipped with a tether anchor, use it. The tether gives better protection in a crash.

How long should my child be riding rear facing?

Children over 20 pounds and 1 year can be turned forward facing but remember, your child is better protected rear facing. Appropriate restraints are forward facing convertibles and forward facing only combination seats.

When can my child sit with a seat belt?

Children over 40 pounds need to sit on a booster seat until they are at least 8 years or unless they are over 4'9" tall. A booster seat allows the vehicles lap and shoulder belt to fit the child properly. Never allow a child to place the shoulder harness under their arm or behind their back. Booster seats must be used with both lap and shoulder belts.

- They can sit with their backs against the back of the seat and their knees bend comfortable over the front edge of the seat
- The lap portion of the seat belt fit across their upper thighs/lower hips
- The shoulder portion of the belt crosses the middle of their shoulder
- The can remain in this position for the whole trip