

CAR SEAT SAFETY

Car been in a crash?

You must meet ALL of the criteria below AND contact the car seat manufacturer before you can consider your car seat safe to continue to use:

- ✓ The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site
- ✓ The door nearest to the car seat was not damaged
- ✓ There were no injuries to any of the vehicle's occupants
- ✓ The air bags (if present) did not deploy
- ✓ There is no visible damage to the car seat
- ✓ However, it is still recommended to replace the car seat, as crashes may cause unseen stress fractures that may compromise the safety of the seat in future crashes

Other Concerns:

- Consider projectiles in your vehicle – ALL objects should be secured, especially heavy objects like strollers and diaper bags (even a box of Kleenex can become dangerous in a crash).
- Watch for hot seats and hot buckles.
- NEVER leave your keys in the car or in the ignition.
- Use caution when shutting car doors.
- NEVER leave a baby or child alone in the car.
- Lock all power doors and windows to prevent pinching, strangulation and falls.
- Use static cling shades vs. suction-cup, retractable shades (these may become projectiles in a crash).

- **In Colorado, 80-90% of car seats are NOT installed correctly – have your seat checked!**
- **“Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children ages 14 and under.” (Safe Kids, USA)**



Finding a Car Seat

- Avoid using a used seat unless you know its history (avoid garage sale or thrift store purchases).
- Car seats EXPIRE six years after their date of manufacture (should be printed on the side of the seat). Plastic can degrade and get brittle over time, making the seat less likely to perform as intended during a crash.
- When shopping, try the car seat in your car BEFORE purchasing (compatibility issues may exist).
- Price is not always an indication of safety.
- A 5-point harness is preferred over a 3-point harness.
- Keep in mind that if you buy an infant-only seat, you will need an infant-toddler (convertible) seat later (watch for height and weight limitations in the infant-only seats). Infants who outgrow their seat limitations before their first birthday will need a new seat that is rear-facing to use until they are at least one year old (able to turn forward by law).
- Check out the car seat shopping guide at www.nhtsa.gov and Consumer Reports' site (www.consumerreports.org) to look at reviews and ratings on safety and ease of use.
- Send in your registration card or register your seat to make sure you are notified of recalls (www.recalls.gov, www.nhtsa.gov, U.S. Auto Safety Hotline 1-800-424-9393)

Installation and Daily Use

- Thoroughly read the car seat AND vehicle instruction manuals before attempting to install the seat.
- Children should remain rear-facing until they reach the highest rear-facing weight limits of the seat (at least until age one – www.aap.org).
- One year of age AND 20 pounds (must be BOTH) is the MINIMUM requirement of the law that children MUST meet before being turned forward-facing.
- The preferred installation location is the middle of the back seat (NEVER in front of an active airbag).
- If you have leather seats, try rubberized shelf liner to decrease movement and protect seats.
- Check the instruction manual, but usually the carrier handle should be in the down position when driving.
- DO NOT add anything to the seat that did not come with it (toys, head supports, mirrors, etc.).
- There should be no more than ONE INCH of movement side-to-side at the belt path when moving the seat with moderate force.
- A 45-degree angle recline (check the seat for an angle indicator) is crucial for rear-facing seats to help keep an infant's airway open (use rolled towels or pool noodles to assist in creating an angle if needed).
- Make sure that there are no twists or tears in the harness straps.
- Harnesses should be at or BELOW the infant's shoulders for rear-facing seats (at or ABOVE for forward-facing seats).
- The retainer clip should be at armpit level.
- Harnesses should fit SNUG – no more than ONE finger should fit between the harnesses and baby's collarbone.
- Do not add padding between the child and the back of the seat.
- One layer of clothing is preferred (this will create the best fit) – if you need to cover baby with a blanket, secure baby in the car and then cover baby vs. wrapping baby in a blanket, then securing.

Colorado's Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Law

For more information go to:
www.carseatscolorado.com

Children are exempt from the law when:

- They are being transported in a medical emergency.
- They are being transported in a motor vehicle built to commercial standards, such as a school bus.
- A child is at least four years of age and less than 55 inches tall and the child is being transported in a vehicle equipped with ONLY a two-point lap belt system available for the child. In this case, it is unsafe to use a booster seat (which should be used with a lap and shoulder belt combination only), and the child shall be properly restrained in a lap belt.

Children are exempt from the law when:

- This free of charge program allows for parents to have their seats checked by a Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician during a convenient 30 minute appointment scheduled during their hospital stay.
- The Safe Start for Baby Program will guarantee that your baby's first ride and every ride is safe.
- It is recommended that you try to install the seat prior to your appointment, so that you are familiar with the instructions. The technician will check your installation, and assist you in correcting any errors. If it is not possible for you to install your seat, the technicians will assist you with this, and make sure you feel comfortable installing it.
- Technicians are available Monday through Saturday mornings. It is recommended that you schedule your appointment as soon as possible. To reach the program, please dial extension 2992 (303-320-2992).
- Community members can schedule a check for the 1st or 3rd Sundays of the month.

Colorado Law Basics

- The infant seat, child safety seat and seat belt provisions of the law are primary enforcement, meaning the driver can be stopped and ticketed if an officer sees an unrestrained or improperly restrained child in the vehicle.
- The booster seat portion of the law is secondary enforcement, meaning a driver must be stopped for another driving offense before being ticketed for a violation of the booster seat provision.
- The minimum fine is \$58.80 for violations of Colorado's Child Passenger Safety Law. The driver can be fined for each unrestrained or improperly restrained child in the vehicle.
- The law applies to children being transported in a privately owned, non-commercial vehicle and in non-commercial vehicles operated by childcare centers.
- Children must be buckled up in both the front and back seats on every trip.
- It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that child passengers are buckled up in the appropriate restraints on every trip.
- The child restraint must have a label that says it meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.
- To ensure children are properly restrained as required by law, refer to the car seat owner's manual and the vehicle owner's manual.
- In 1999, the Colorado State Legislature repealed the exemption in the law that allowed a child to ride unbuckled when all seating positions were occupied. All children under the age of 16 must be buckled up with appropriate car seats, booster seats, or vehicle seat belts in both the front and back seats.

Keeping Your Child Safe through the Ages

How do I keep my infant safe?

- ✓ **The law requires** infants to ride in a rear-facing child safety seat until they are at least one year old AND weigh at least 20 pounds.
- ✓ **Safety Advocates recommend** that infants continue riding in a rear-facing position as long as possible for the best protection in a crash. Many larger, convertible type child safety seats will allow an infant or child to ride rear-facing up to 35 pounds.

How do I keep my child safe from ages one to four?

- ✓ **The law requires** that children ages one to four years who weigh 20 to 40 pounds be restrained in a forward-facing child safety seat.
- ✓ **Safety Advocates recommend** restraining your child in a harness restraint that meets all of your child's needs until they are at least 40 pounds. The use of top tether straps is also strongly recommended.

How do I keep my child safe from ages four to six?

- ✓ **The law requires** that children who weigh over 40 pounds or who are at least four years old, but less than six years old be properly restrained in a child booster seat unless they are 55 inches tall.
- ✓ **Safety Advocates recommend** keeping children in booster seats until they are about 57 inches tall or can meet the 5-Step Seatbelt Test.

How do I know if my child is ready for a seatbelt instead of a booster seat?

- ✓ **The law requires** that a child who is at least six years old or is at least 55 inches tall, must be properly restrained with the motor vehicle's safety belt.
- ✓ **Safety Advocates recommend** that parents should use the 5-Step Seatbelt Test to determine if children are ready to use a seatbelt (ALL five conditions should be met):
 1. The child can sit all the way back against the vehicle's seat.
 2. The child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle's seat.
 3. The belt crosses the shoulder between the neck and the arm.
 4. The lap belt is as low as possible, touching the thighs.
 5. The child can stay seated like this for the whole trip.

