

# Installing Car Seats

- **NEVER** place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat of a car that has a passenger-side air bag. When the air bag inflates, it abruptly hits the back of the rear-facing car seat and can cause serious or fatal injury to the infant.
- If your car has a passenger-side air bag, children under age 13 should always ride in the back seat. Even if your car doesn't have an air bag, the back seat is safer.
- The child must be positioned securely in the car seat and the car seat installed securely in the vehicle.
- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions *exactly* when installing any car seat.
- Check your car owner's manual to find out which safety belts can be used to secure car seats in your vehicle.
- Be aware that car seats cannot be secured with automatic safety belts or belts that come out of the door of your car.
- The middle of the back seat is recommended as the safest location to place a car seat, as long as it works well for installation.
- Infants must be positioned rear-facing until at least 20 pounds and at least 1-year-old. (*If your baby reaches 20 pounds before 1 year, select a convertible car seat that rear faces to a higher weight. In fact, children should ride rear facing as long as possible, until they reach the maximum weight or height limits allowed by the manufacturer.*)
- If you use a lap/shoulder belt with a free sliding latch plate, you may need a locking clip to hold the safety belt in place.

# Do You Need a Locking Clip?

If you are installing your child's car seat with a lap/shoulder belt you may need a locking clip.

If the latch plate of the lap/shoulder belt can slide up and down the safety belt freely, you may need to use a locking clip to prevent the latch plate from sliding. If a locking clip is required but you do not use one, your car seat will not stay securely in place. This can increase the chance of your child being injured in a crash.

You can obtain locking clips from car seat manufacturers and from many local car seat programs. They also come with the purchase of new car seats.

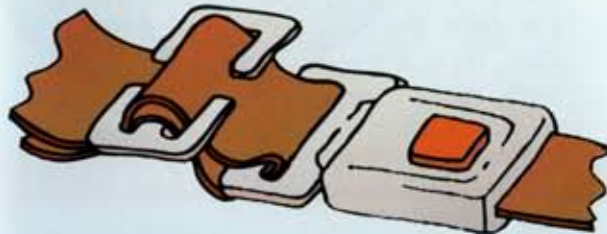
Look in your car owner's manual for the section that tells you how to put a car seat in your vehicle. The manual will tell you if your belts will work with a car seat and whether or not you need a locking clip.



LOCKING CLIP



LATCH PLATE



# Remember...

- Properly restraining children in motor vehicles is the law.
- Car seats must meet or exceed federal safety standards (*check for a label*).
- There are many types of car seats. Choose one that will fit your child and your car.
- A car seat must be used correctly every time you travel.
- Read and follow the manufacturer's directions for your car seat and vehicle regarding car seats, safety belts, and locking clips.
- Infants **must** face the rear of the vehicle.
- **Never** use a rear-facing car seat in the front seat of a car with a passenger-side airbag.
- The back seat is the safest place for all children to ride.
- **Never** place shoulder belts under a child's arms or behind his or her back.
- Make sure everyone buckles up every time.

# The Ins and Outs of Safe Travel



At Riley Hospital for Children, Indiana University School of Medicine

Printing and distribution is made possible by support from the Governor's Council on Impaired & Dangerous Driving, Office of Traffic Safety, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.  
©2005 Automotive Safety Program.

# Car Seats and Safety Belts, Why Bother?

Car seats and safety belts are designed to spread the force of a crash over the strongest parts of the body and to keep drivers and passengers inside the vehicle.

A person who is buckled up has a better chance of survival than one who is not. In a crash, an unrestrained child or adult can collide with the vehicle's interior and might be thrown out.

Child restraints are 71% effective in reducing deaths for infants and 54% for 1 to 4 year olds.

Belt-positioning boosters used with safety belts are 59% more effective than safety belts alone in reducing injuries for children 4 to 8 years old.

The Indiana Child Restraint Law requires that all babies and children be safely and properly restrained in vehicles.

## Selecting a Car Seat

There is not one "best" car seat. Like children, car seats come in all shapes and sizes. Choose a seat that is the right size for your child, that fits your vehicle's seat and safety belts, is easy for you to use, and fits your budget.

Select a car seat that has a label stating that it meets or exceeds federal safety standards. It should also be free of any visible damage, have all of its parts, and not have been involved in a crash. (More information on crashed car seats can be found at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).)

Choose a car seat that isn't too old. In general, the life of a car seat is around six years. Many car seats are stamped with expiration dates.

A new car seat will come with a registration card attached. Be sure to fill this out and mail it to the manufacturer. The car seat manufacturer will be able to notify you if the seat is recalled and what to do to fix it.

ALWAYS read the manufacturer's instructions for details about your car seat.



## Which Seat Does My Child Need?

**Infant Only Seats** are designed for infants up to 20 pounds and 26 inches. These must be used in a rear-facing position to support the baby in the event of a crash.

The rear-facing position better protects the fragile neck.

**Note:** Never use a rear-facing car seat in a front seat that has a passenger-side airbag—this can cause severe or fatal injuries to the child in the event of a crash.

**Convertible Seats** are designed for children up to 40 pounds and 40 inches. They are used rear-facing for infants and young toddlers and forward-facing for older toddlers. Convertible seats with shields or trays should not be used with newborns or small infants. In a crash, the shield or tray can hit the baby in the face or neck, causing injury or death.



**Boosters** are designed for children over 40 pounds who have outgrown convertible car seats. They help position seat belts properly and provide added height for the child.

- Belt-positioning boosters are used with lap/shoulder belts.
- Use a booster that meets federal safety standards (check for a label) and not objects such as pillows or books. If your car only has lap belts in the back seat, contact the **Automotive Safety Program, 1-800-KID-N-CAR**, for further information.

**Safety Belts** are used when a child outgrows a booster seat, usually not until a child is around 4'9", 80-100 pounds, and 8-10 years old. Safety belts need to be worn low on the hips, across the chest, and snug. Never place the shoulder harness under the arms or behind the back. This can cause serious injuries in the event of a crash.

**Special Needs Restraints** are designed for children who cannot use car seats or safety belts because of a medical condition (such as a body cast or breathing problems). For information on these restraints, contact your physician or the **Automotive Safety Program** at:

