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Car Seats

Protecting your child in a motor vehicle

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury and death for children in the United States. At particular risk are infants and other children who ride unrestrained, improperly restrained, or are too close to the instrument panel during a collision. When used correctly, child restraints and safety belts are 50% to 70% effective in preventing fatalities and reducing serious injuries. Unfortunately, despite the existence of laws in all 50 states requiring the use of child restraints, more than one-third of young children still ride unrestrained in motor vehicles.

Tragic reports of children being seriously injured or killed by air bags have raised public awareness and concern about our ability to adequately protect children who ride in motor vehicles. Air bags can seriously injure or kill occupants, especially those who are not properly restrained in the front seat.

Studies show that safety belts and air bags are effective in reducing injury and preventing death in adults. But neither safety belts nor air bags are designed to protect infants and other young children, who need the protection of appropriate child restraints.

Drivers have a responsibility to ensure that all passengers, including infants and children, are properly restrained in the vehicle. The American Medical Association and General Motors Corporation have developed this brochure to inform drivers and parents of necessary safety measures and precautions that can save the lives of young children who ride in motor vehicles. Please take the time to read this information and discuss it with your pediatrician.

Child Restraint Recommendations

All infants and young children should be secured in a child restraint appropriate for their age and size. A rear seat is the safer place for all children to be secured. If a toddler or older child must ride in the front seat, adjust the vehicle seat as far back as possible. During the trip, be sure the child is restrained properly, sitting up against the seat back, and is not leaning forward.

Approximate Age of Child	Approximate Size of Child	Type of Child Restraint (1)
Premature/low birth weight infants	Premature/low birth weight infants	Infant car bed (2)
Birth to 1 year	Birth to 20 pounds (note: some restraints can be used rear-facing up to 30 pounds or more)	Rear-facing infant restraint (3)

1 to 4 years	20 to 40 pounds; 26 to 40 inches tall	Forward-facing child restraint
4 to 8 years	40 to 80 pounds 52 inches tall	Booster seat (4)

(1) Read and follow the vehicle owner's manual and the instructions provided with the child restraint system for proper usage. Be sure the restraint you choose fits securely in the vehicle before you transport a child in it.

Newer vehicles and child restraints may have a system to help simplify installation of the restraints. This system, called LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children), uses vehicle anchors and child restraint attachment devices to allow for a more uniform method of securing restraints.

(2) Use only if necessary, as recommended by your pediatrician. When using an infant car bed, be sure it is secured properly when the infant's head resting toward the center of the vehicle.

(3) Never secure a rear-facing infant restraint in front of an active air bag.

(4) Use a booster seat until the child outgrows it, at which time the child can use an adult safety belt. Never place shoulder belts behind a child's back or under the arm.

To protect children in motor vehicles, please remember these points:

- All infants and young children should be secured correctly in appropriate child restraints.
- A rear seat is the safer place for all children to be secured.
- Air bags do not replace the need for all motor vehicle occupants to be properly restrained. (Unrestrained occupants of any age are at increased risk of being injured or killed in a collision. Unrestrained occupants in the front seat are especially at risk of possible injury or death from an inflating air bag).
- The use of child restraints and safety belts is a learned habit.

(Begin using an appropriate restraint the day your baby leaves the hospital, and use one every time you transport your child in a motor vehicle).

For more information on safety belts, child restraints, and air bags, call 866-700-0001 to receive a free copy of the 32-page illustrated booklet:

Precious Cargo:
Protecting the Children Who Ride with You

The American Medical Association and General Motors urge that everyone riding in a motor vehicle be secured properly. Remember that "Protecting Children in Motor Vehicles" is "A Matter of Restraint"