



Children's Health

Safety

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE IN AN AUTOMOBILE

The desire to hold and protect our children is a natural one. Where else but in our arms are our children most safe? In an automobile this does not hold true. The fact is, each year 50,000 people die in automobile accidents that are caused by unpredictable factors: alcohol, mechanical failure and carelessness. Even if you're traveling at 30 miles per hour, an impact can rip a child from your arms with a force comparable to falling from a three-story building. Using the proper car seat for your child and making sure it is properly installed will greatly reduce the risk of injury and death in a car accident.

TIPS FOR SAFE TRAVEL

- ▶ When purchasing a car seat, always buy one that was made after 1981, when stricter safety standards were enacted.
- ▶ Never put infants in a front seat with passenger-side air bags. If your car has dual air bags and no back seat, your infant should not ride in that vehicle.
- ▶ Follow all of the car seat and car manufacturer's instructions when installing a car seat.
- ▶ Infants under 1 year old and under 20 pounds should be secured in a rear-facing, infant-only car safety seat at a 45-degree angle and with a five-point harness.
- ▶ Children over 1 year old and over 20 pounds can be moved to a forward-facing position in a standard child safety seat. It's safest to have your child sit in a back passenger seat of the car and a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible. However, if the child must ride in the front seat, make sure the seat is pushed as far back from the dash as possible and there is no passenger airbag.
- ▶ Children who are 40 inches tall and weigh over 40 pounds can sit in a car booster seat. If your child must ride in the front seat, make sure the seat is pushed as far back as possible from the dash and there is no passenger airbag.
- ▶ It is safest if children under 12 years don't ride in front seats of cars with passenger airbags.

THE BACK SEAT IS BEST

Whichever type of car seat you're using, the rear center seat is always the safest. And even when children can fit comfortably and correctly into the car's combination lap and shoulder belts, they should still ride in the back seat. The lap belt should stay low and tight on the hips and should not ride up over the stomach. The shoulder belt should fit across the shoulder and chest, not across the front of the face or neck.

