

Car crashes are the #1 preventable cause of death for children and young adults . . .

as well as a major cause of permanent brain damage, epilepsy, and spinal cord injuries. A sudden stop at 30 miles per hour could cause the same crushing force on your child's brain and body as a fall from a 3-story building. Fortunately, by buckling up children, we can prevent most of these deaths and serious injuries.

Safety seats save lives and prevent injuries.

I became involved in the field of child passenger safety in 1970 because it was extremely hard to find a safe car seat for my daughter, Kerstin. She ended up riding in a forward-facing seat with a shield at just 5 months of age because only a few seats were crash-tested then. Fortunately, protection for babies and older children is much better today. Kaja and Tavi, my daughter's twins (cover photo), rode rear facing from birth until they outgrew their seats at about age two. They continued riding in seats with a 5-point harness until they were seven. At age 10, although Tavi is tall for his age, both use boosters for correct belt fit and always ride in the back seat. *Stephanie M. Tombrello, LCSW, CPSTI
Executive Director, SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.*

Boosters reduce injuries by 45% for kids ages 4-8.

"I want to share a brief story about what happened to my son Alex and me, with the hope someone can benefit from our experience. For some reason my son had moved his booster seat into the third row in our van. We were in a hurry, so I sat him without a booster and thought 'Oh, what will it matter this time.' As I was about to close the door, I noticed the safety belt was hitting him too high. I stopped and had him crawl into the booster and I reached back to buckle him in. No more than 10 minutes later, we were going through a green light at 45 mph when someone tried to make a left turn in front of us. Our van was totaled in the crash, but I was OK because of my safety belt and air bag and Alex was OK because he was in his booster seat."

*(Adapted from a letter by Catherine Musicant.
A picture of Alex in his booster is on the cover.)*

(Questions & Answers continued from inside)

■ Why should children ride in the back seat?

The back seat is almost twice as safe as the front, whether or not the vehicle has air bags. Some research shows that children should ride in the back seat until they reach age 15.

■ How do I install my child's car seat?

Check the vehicle owner's manual and the safety seat instruction booklet to learn about using the safety belt or LATCH system. If you install your safety seat with a vehicle belt, make sure it is buckled and locked (see instructions) to keep it from loosening during normal driving. If you install your safety seat with LATCH, attach the pair of LATCH connectors (usually on a strap) that came with the safety seat to the anchors in the car. Most cars have two pairs of LATCH anchors (small bars in the crack between the seatback and seat cushion) in the back seat. After buckling the belt or attaching the LATCH connectors, press down on the safety seat while tightening the lap portion of the vehicle belt or LATCH strap. To check your installation, hold the safety seat on both sides near the place where the belt or strap is threaded. Push toward the front and sides of the vehicle. It should not move more than one inch. All forward-facing seats should be anchored to the car with the top tether strap, if possible (check instructions).

■ Should I wear a safety belt while I'm pregnant?

Yes. Too many babies die because of injuries to expectant mothers who fail to buckle up properly. Keep the lap belt low, below the bump. Place the top part of the belt over the shoulder and across the chest, never under the arm. Slide your seat back, as far as possible from the steering wheel, dashboard, or air bag.

■ What else do I need to know?

Every year, thousands of children are injured or die in parking lots or driveways due to heat stroke, being strangled by a power window, or being run over because they can't be seen by the driver. Never leave a baby or young child alone in a car or around parked cars. Another risk is from unused safety belts that can be reached by a child. Children have pulled belts all the way out, which makes the retractor lock, and wrapped them around their necks. In a few cases, the child died before the driver could stop the car and cut the belt. Unused belts should be buckled, tightened, and locked, if possible. Finally, make sure that everything in the car – people, groceries, strollers – is buckled up or tied down with cargo straps. Being hit by a loose object or passenger during a crash is a common cause of injury or death.

Call SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. for information about child restraints sold by vehicle dealers, car beds for babies who must lie flat, products for children with special needs, air travel.

**SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., Box 553, Altadena, CA 91003
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THE PERFECT GIFT Your Child's Safety



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CAR SAFETY SEATS

How can I tell if my child's seat is a "safe" one?

All safety seats must pass crash tests and meet government safety standards. When you buy a new seat, register online or mail in the registration card. The manufacturer will send you a letter if there is a recall. Keep the instruction booklet with the seat and make an extra copy to keep at home. Look for the date the seat was made (on a paper sticker, next to the model number) and write it on your copy.

Are used car seats safe?

Avoid buying a used safety seat at a thrift shop or garage sale. It could be missing parts or have invisible crash damage. If you already have a safety seat, be sure that (a) it has stickers with the model number and date made; (b) it is not too old – most expire in 6-9 years; (c) it has all of its parts, including the instruction booklet; (d) it has not been recalled (check the list at www.carseat.org).

Five Rules for Auto Safety

1. Choose a safety seat that fits your child.
2. Check that it fits tightly in the car.
3. Remove all slack from harness or safety belt.
4. Follow instructions exactly.
5. Buckle up children in the back seat.

Which car seat is the "best?"

The "best" seat is the one that... **Fits your child**
Children should ride facing the back of the car until at least age two, longer if possible. Facing the rear is five times safer than facing forward. Rear-facing-only seats usually have a detachable base. Convertible seats fit longer and can be changed from rear facing to forward facing. Use a convertible seat rear facing until the child is too heavy (according to the weight limit in the instructions) or too tall (the child's head is within an inch of the top edge of the seat). The next step is a forward-facing convertible seat or a forward-facing-only seat with a harness. When the harness is outgrown, either by weight or height, a booster is needed until the safety belt fits properly. Most kids need a booster until age 10-12.

Fits your car(s)

Try before you buy! Read and follow both sets of instructions – the booklet included with the safety seat and the "child restraint" section in your vehicle owner's manual. Make sure the safety seat you have chosen fits in the back seat of the car, matches the shape of the vehicle seat cushion, and can be firmly attached with the vehicle belt or LATCH.*

Fits the needs of your family

Choose a seat that is easy to use correctly, including installing it in your car(s) and adjusting the harness. The "best" safety seat for your family is the one you and your child will be comfortable using on every ride.

*Lower Anchors and Tethers for CHildren. All new cars and many made since 2000 have special hardware to attach child safety seats.

Which features are most important?

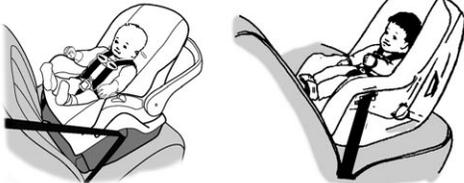
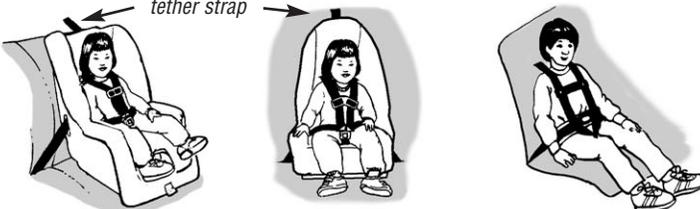
Check and compare weight limits (lower and upper) and shoulder strap level (lowest and highest) to make sure the seat will fit your child as he or she grows. Read carefully, since some seats have a different weight limit when they are used as a booster (without the harness). If you are expecting a baby, choose a rear-facing-only or convertible seat with low shoulder strap slots and two or more slots for the buckle. Some seats have a removable infant insert that improves fit and comfort. Make sure the harness is easy to loosen and tighten. You may want to get a seat with shoulder straps that are easy to slide up and down to stay level with the child's shoulders, especially if you use the seat for more than one child. Some features for easier installation are belt lock-offs and click-on LATCH connectors (instead of hooks), rebound bars or tethers to reduce movement of rear-facing seats. Read about special testing and extra safety features provided by some manufacturers.

How can I keep my child in the safety seat?

- Start a lifelong habit with baby's first ride.
- Strengthen the habit by never making an exception.
- Encourage good passengers with praise, singing, games.
- Keep a bag of special soft toys and books in the car.
- Make regular stops to stretch.
- Introduce your child to a new safety seat with a short trip for fun.
- Always wear your own safety belt!

(Continued on back panel)

HOW TO CHOOSE AND USE CAR SAFETY SEATS

	Newborns and Toddlers Face rear as long as possible (until age 2 or more)	Young Children Use harness & tether as long as possible (check weight & height limits)	Older Children Use belt-positioning booster until child can pass 5-Step Test (see below).
Type of Safety Seat	<p>Passenger air bags have killed babies!</p>  <p>Rear-facing-only seat (Most fit up to 30-35 lbs.) Rear-facing convertible (Rear facing up to 35-45 lbs.)</p>	 <p>Forward-facing convertible (Most fit up to 50-80 lbs.) Forward-facing only (Most convert to booster) Harness or built-in (Weight limits vary)</p>	 <p>Belt-positioning booster with lap and shoulder belt (For children who have outgrown seats with a harness) Lap and shoulder belt</p>
How to Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety seat is firmly installed (1-inch test). • Safety seat is tilted about halfway back. • Newborn's head does not flop forward. • Child's head is at least 1" below top edge of seat. • Straps are in slots at or below shoulder level. • Harness is adjusted snugly before adding blankets. • Final step: Chest clip at armpit level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety seat is firmly installed (1-inch test). • Child sits upright or slightly tipped back. • Top tether strap is hooked to anchor in vehicle. • Straps are in slots at or above shoulder level. • Harness is very snug (cannot pinch strap between fingers). • Chest clip is at armpit level. 	<p>Try the 5-Step Test to find out if the child is ready for belt only.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat? 2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat? 3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm? 4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs? 5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip? <p>If you cannot answer "yes" to all 5 questions, the child needs a booster.</p>
Errors to Avoid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never face baby forward. • Never place baby in front of active air bag. • Never use household carrier in car. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never let the straps slip down on the arms. • Never leave any slack in the harness ("pinch test"). • Never let the child out of the seat "just this once". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never put two people in one belt. • Never put shoulder belt under arm or behind back. • Never use only lap belt with a booster.