

## Is Your Car Seat Installed Correctly?

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in children. About 40 percent of the children killed in crashes were unrestrained. When car seats are installed properly and used correctly, they can reduce the risk of fatal injury by 54 to 71 percent. A 2016 report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (N.H.T.S.A.) found that up to 59 percent of car seats were misused.

There are a lot of different child safety seats parents and caregivers can choose from on the market. This, combined with the vast differences in the many makes and models of vehicles on the market, can make the task of selecting and properly installing a seat correctly every time feel daunting. Some people are surprised to find that a higher price tag for your car seat does not necessarily mean the seat is safer than a less expensive model on the market. All seats are required to meet the same federal safety standard. Each seat manufacturer must crash test and certify all of their seat models before they are available on the market. N.H.T.S.A. does random testing after car seats are on the market to ensure they comply with federal standards.

The most important thing to remember when selecting a seat for your child is fit. This means the best car seat for your child is one that fits your child based on the height and weight requirements of the seat manufacturer and is easy for you to install and be confident in correctly buckling your child securely every time.

Some key points to remember about car seats and safety when transporting your little ones:

- Keep kids rear-facing as long as possible. The safest way for your child to ride is rear-facing! The child should stay in a rear-facing seat until they have reached the maximum height and weight requirements for that seat. American Academy of Pediatrics recommends finding a seat that will accommodate their weight and height rear-facing to age two.
- Follow the car seat manufacturer's requirements of your seat for height and weight, and for things like seating positions, the carry handle positions when traveling, and expiration dates.
- All forward-facing harnessed seats have a tether strap that connects the top of the seat to an anchor point in the vehicle. This tether is important as it decreases the amount of space a child's head can pitch forward in a sudden stop or crash.
- Use a booster! Many families rush to move their child from this important step in safety before it is safe to do so. A child under 4 foot 9 inches belongs in a booster no matter their age.

These are simple steps you can take to ensure your child is riding safely every time they get in your car. The instruction manual for your seat, as well as the owner's manual of your vehicle, will provide you with important details on installation, as well as the height and weight requirements of the child using the seat. This information is critical and should always be followed. However, sometimes this information can seem overwhelming or

confusing, especially for new parents. Many seat manufacturers now offer video demonstrations and additional resources online. For more information, or to schedule a virtual seat check, email [arichardson@mvpfd.org](mailto:arichardson@mvpfd.org)

<https://www.mvpfd.org/general/page/car-seat-check-information>