Child Safety Seats

Regardless of age or weight, **all children** must be in a child safety seat, booster seat or seat belt while riding in a vehicle. **Laws and regulations regarding child auto safety vary from state to state**. Follow the laws in your area.

Child safety seats and booster seats save children's lives. Failure to use a child restraint system may increase the risk of death or serious injury to a child in an accident. Traffic accidents are the leading cause of death for children aged 4 years to 14 years. Nearly half of the children under the age of 14 years, who die in auto accidents, are completely unrestrained. **Failure to properly secure a child in a child safety seat or booster seat is illegal.**

Rear-Facing Seats
Keep infants in the back seat of a vehicle, in a rear-facing child safety seat, until reaching the upper weight and height limit of the seat. At a minimum, a child needs a rear-facing child safety seat until the age of 1 year **AND** a weight of 20 pounds (9 kilograms).

Forward-Facing Seats
Toddlers (at a minimum of 1 year of age **AND** at least 20 pounds (9 kilograms)) should ride in forward-facing child safety seats. Forward-facing child safety seats should be placed in the back seat. A child should ride in a forward-facing child safety seat until reaching the upper weight and height limit of the seat. At a minimum, a child will need a forward-facing child safety seat until the age of 4 years **AND** 40 pounds (18 kilograms). Signs that a child has outgrown the forward-facing child safety seat include:

- Being over the weight and height limits of the seat.
- Having shoulders above the top harness slots.
- Having ears at or above the top of the seat.

Booster Seats
Once children have outgrown forward-facing seats, they should ride in forward-facing booster seats until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Booster seats should be placed in the back seat. Signs that a child has outgrown a booster seat and can use the vehicle seat belts include:

- Wearing the vehicle shoulder belt across the middle of the chest and shoulder, **NOT** the neck.
- Wearing the vehicle lap belt low and snug across the upper thighs, **NOT** the belly.
- Being able to set against the vehicle seat back with knees bent over the vehicle seat bottom cushion.

The vehicle seat belts usually fit properly when a child reaches a height of 4' 9" (145 cm). This is usually between the ages of 8 and 12 years old.

Vehicle Seat Belts
Children who have outgrown their booster seats should ride in the back seat, using the vehicle seat belts until reaching 13 years of age.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that child safety seats be replaced following a moderate or severe crash.

For more information, please see:
http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/airbags/occupantprotectionfacts/appendixc.htm

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