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CAR SEAT SAFETY

Ohio law states that **all** children must be restrained in a correctly used child safety seat until they are **4 years of age *and* weigh at least 40 pounds**. Federal law encourages booster seat use for all children who have outgrown child safety seats until they are at least 8 years of age unless they are 4'9" tall. Laws for booster seat use have not been passed in Ohio at this time.

WHERE YOUR CHILD SHOULD RIDE

Never place a rear-facing infant in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger side airbag. This could result in serious injury or death to your child if the air bag inflates. All children under the age of 13 should ride in the back seat. That is the safest place.

REAR-FACING OR FORWARD-FACING?

All children should ride **rear-facing** until they are at least **20 pounds *and* one year of age**. The rear-facing position offers the best protection for your child. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends keeping the child rear-facing for as long as the seats allows. Some seats allow for facing the rear up to 35 pounds.

HOW TO PLACE YOUR CHILD IN THE CAR SEAT

- Select the correct car seat for your child's age, weight and height.
- Always read and follow the instructions that came with the car seat. Also read and follow the instructions in the owner's manual of the vehicle.
- Place your child in the car seat. The child's back and bottom should be flat against the back of the car seat.
- When using a car seat rear-facing, harness straps should be at or below your child's shoulders (Picture 1).
- When using a car seat forward-facing, harness straps should be at or above your child's shoulders.
- The harness straps should fit snugly against your child's body. No more than one adult finger should fit in between the child's collarbone and the harness straps.
- The harness clip should be at your child's armpit level. The harness clip keeps the harness straps close and snug on the child's shoulders.
- If needed, support your child's head **with folded towels** or rolled-up receiving blankets on either side of the head. **Never** place anything behind the child's back or under the child's bottom.



Picture 1 Rear-facing infant-only car seat.



Picture 2 Rear-facing convertible car seat.

HOW TO INSTALL THE CAR SEAT

Read the owner's manual for your vehicle. Follow the instructions for adjusting the seat positions and the seat belts.

- A rear-facing car seat should always be reclined at a 45-degree angle so the child's head does not flop forward. Many car seats have feet that can be adjusted to change the angle of the car seat. A firmly rolled-up towel under the base of the car seat may be used if the car seat's instructions allow. Most forward-facing car seats should be kept in the upright position.
- Secure the child restraint in the back seat by routing the safety belt through the car seat according to the instructions that came with the car seat. If your vehicle was produced after October of 2002, the latch attachment can be used instead of the seat belt.
- Get a tight fit. The car seat should not move more than one inch forward or from side-to-side from where it's attached to the vehicle. If your vehicle was produced after October of 1999, look for tether anchors and attach your car's seat tether if the seat is forward-facing.

WHEN YOUR CHILD MAY USE A BOOSTER SEAT

- All children who have outgrown car seats should be properly restrained in boosters until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are more than 4'9" tall. A booster seat positions the child so that the seat belt fits correctly: low over the hips and thighs, and snug over the shoulders.
- When your child sits on a booster, if his ears are above the vehicle seat and there is no headrest, he must use a high back booster.

WHEN YOUR CHILD MAY USE A SEAT BELT

- According to the NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Association) a child should ride in a booster seat until he is 8 years old unless he is 4'9" or taller. Seat belts are for children who are tall enough to sit with their knees bent at the edge of the seat without slouching.
- A child should sit all the way back against the vehicle seat. If he can't do this, he needs a booster.
- Lap and shoulder belts should fit low over the hips and upper thighs and snugly over the shoulders. Your child should be able to ride like this for the whole trip.
- Never allow children to put the shoulder belts under their arms or behind their backs.

USED CAR SEATS

Used child safety seats **should not be used** unless you are certain they have never been in a crash, they have all the pieces including the instructions, and they have been checked for recalls. However, a used car seat is better than no seat at all. **Seats should not be used for more than 6 years.**

If you would like more information, please feel free to contact one of Nationwide Children's Hospital's child passenger safety specialists at (614) 722-6524 or call the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.