

Car Seat Safety

Checklist and safety tips

This handout gives tips to help you to install and use your car seat safely. Please carefully read the instruction booklet that came with your car seat.

About Car Seats

More than 80% of car seats are used improperly. This puts children at great risk for injury and death. To make sure your car seat meets the latest safety standards, **we urge you to call 800.BUCK.L.UP (800.282.5587) or visit www.800buckleup.org.**



This car seat is installed correctly. It is at a 45° angle.

Checklist

There are many car seat types and models. Some car seats are best suited for preterm babies. How do you know which one is right for your infant?

The right car seat fits your baby and your car. Use this checklist to help you to know if your car seat is safe. **All of these items must be true for your car seat to be safe:**

- My car seat is the right size for my infant. (Check your car seat's height and weight limits.)
- My car seat fits in my car. (Check your car manual for installation instructions.)
- My car seat has never been in an auto accident or crash.
- My car seat does not have any missing parts.
- My car seat does not have any cracks in the frame.
- My car seat is not more than 6 years old.
- My car seat has instructions (manual, booklet, or a sticker on the seat) or I know how to use the car seat.

How to Use Your Car Seat Safely

Every time you travel:

- The car seat should face the back of the car (“rear-facing”) until your baby is **at least** 2 years old, **or** when their weight and height are greater than the guidelines for the car seat.

You will need a car seat that can be used rear-facing until your baby outgrows the seat. Most children do not outgrow the rear-facing seat till they are **over 2 years old**. Rear-facing is the safest position for reducing risk for spinal injury.

- Place the car seat in the center of the back seat. This is the safest place.
- **Never** place the car seat in front of an air bag.
- Install the car seat at a 45° angle (see photo on page 1). Read the car seat manual for specific instructions.
- The handle should be down and locked when the car is moving.
- The car seat should move no more than 1 inch in either direction where the seatbelt holds it in place.
- Do **not** use products such as fleece inserts, headrests, attachable toys, and belt tighteners that were not installed by the car seat manufacturer. They are not safe.

Placing Your Baby in the Car Seat Correctly

Retainer clip is at armpit level or “tickle zone.”

Harness straps are locked and threaded correctly, not twisted.



Harness straps are at or below your baby’s shoulders.

Make sure the straps fit snugly at your baby’s collarbone – only 1 finger should fit under the strap. If you can fit 2 of your fingers under the strap, it is too loose.



If needed to keep your baby from slipping, place a rolled towel in front of your baby's crotch area and behind the lower harness.



Place rolled towels along the sides to support your baby's head, if needed.

*Only place a blanket over your baby **after** strapping him into the car seat. Do **not** wrap your baby in a blanket or bulky garment before strapping him into the seat. **Never** use extra padding behind or under your baby.*

Resources

If your car seat is not safe to use, talk with your healthcare team. If your baby was born at UW Medical Center, the hospital offers car seats at a good price to parents on the day their baby is discharged.

If you have questions about car seat safety:

- Call **800.BUCK.L.UP** (800.282.5587) or visit www.800bucklup.org:
 - To get the most up-to-date information about car seats
 - To find out if your car seat has been recalled
 - To find the nearest place to have your car seat checked
- Take a baby safety class that includes information about car seat safety. UW Medicine offers “Babysafe with Infant CPR” at several locations. For more information:
 - Call 206.789.0883
 - Visit www.uwmedicine.org/services/obstetrics/childbirth-classes. Type “childbirth education” into the search bar, and scroll down to “Babysafe with Infant CPR.”
- Visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website at www.nhtsa.gov/Safety/CPS. Click on “Car Seats and Booster Seats” for current car seat information, installation tips, instructional videos, and more.
- Visit the Safe Kids USA website at www.safekids.org/car-seat.

Now, please go back to the Table of Contents in this workbook and check the box so your nurses will know you have read this chapter.

Questions?

Your questions are important. If you have questions about car seat safety, please see the “Resources” section on this page.