

## Car Safety Seats: Information for Families

Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children ages four and older. New research into the effectiveness and safety of car seats found that children are safer in rear-facing car seats. Because of this, the American Academy of Pediatrics has recently updated their recommendations regarding car seat use. They now advise that children should ride rear-facing until age two and that older children use a booster seat until at least age eight.

The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends the following overall guidelines regarding car safety use:

**Infants** should ride rear-facing until age two or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the car seat's manufacturer. When children reach the highest weight or length allowed by the manufacturer of the infant-only seat, they should continue to ride rear-facing in a convertible seat. We no longer advise facing forward at twelve months of age and twenty pounds, as was the previous recommendation.

It's best for **toddlers/preschoolers** to ride rear-facing as long as possible to the highest weight and height allowed by the manufacturer of their convertible seat, preferably until age two. When they have outgrown the seat rear-facing, they should use a forward-facing seat with a full harness as long as they fit.

Booster seats are for older, **school-aged children** who have outgrown their forward-facing car safety seats. Booster seats help position the lap and shoulder belt properly. Children should stay in a booster seat until adult belts fit correctly. Most children will need a booster seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall and are between the ages of eight and twelve.

**Older children** who have outgrown their booster seats should ride with a lap and shoulder seat belt in the back seat until thirteen years of age. The shoulder belt should lie across the middle of the shoulder and chest and should not be against the neck. The lap belt should fit low and snug over the child's hips and upper thighs, not across the abdomen.

Not only are the above guidelines for your child's safety, it's **TEXAS LAW!**

Under the "Child Passenger Safety Seat Systems" Law, it is an offense if an adult transports a child who is shorter than 4'9" tall and does not keep the child secured in a safety seat system. In addition, it is also an offense if a child who is greater than 4'9" tall is not restrained with a seat belt. A violation of this law can lead to a hefty fine.

It is absolutely essential that **ALL CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 13 YEARS OF AGE RIDE IN THE BACK SEAT!** An air bag deployed in the front seat can seriously injure or kill children younger than 13 years of age. Remember, even a low velocity "fender-bender" can deploy a front airbag and seriously injure a child in the passenger seat. Children should ride restrained for EVERY trip, no matter how short. Remember, it's your child's life you could be saving so **buckle up!**