

Safety with Car Seats and Booster Seats

Car crashes are the main cause of accidental death and serious injury of children. Correctly using a car or booster seat can save your child's life.

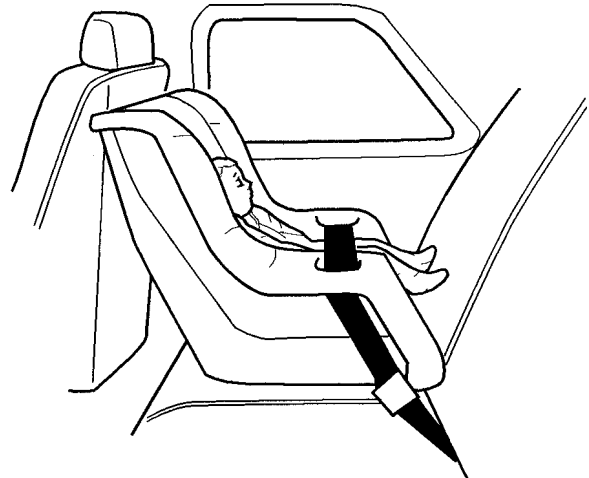
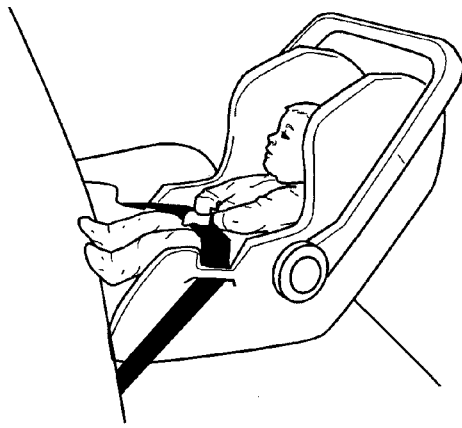
Throughout the United States, there are laws that require car seat and booster seat use for children. Laws in most states require that parents or guardians use a:

- **Rear-facing car seat** for infants under 20 pounds and until at least 2 years old
- **Front-facing car seat** for children under 40 pounds and under 4 years old
- **Booster seat** for children under 80 pounds and under 8 years old

Car seat and booster seat laws may differ by state. When you are traveling with children, follow the laws of the state in which you are driving.

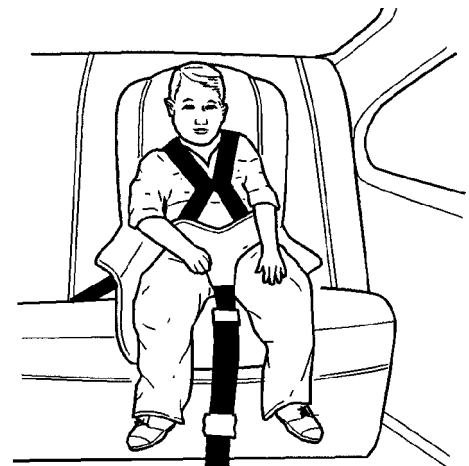
Rear facing car seat

- Your child **must ride facing the rear in a car seat until at least 2 years old** or until they reach the height or weight limit on the car seat for rear facing use.



Front facing car seat

- Children between 20 and 40 pounds and under 4 years old must ride in a car seat facing forward.
- Attach the car seat's tether strap to the tether anchors in the back seat of the car.



Booster seat

- Children under 80 pounds (4 to 8 years old) must ride in booster seats, which make the lap and shoulder belts fit correctly.



Safety tips

Laws require that drivers and front-seat passengers wear a seat belt. Children must wear a seat belt and use a car seat when riding in vehicles.

- Children do not fit in seat belts until they are over 58 inches tall and their knees bend over the edge of the seat.
- The back seat is the safest place for children under 13 years old to ride.
- Never place a child in the front seat of a car or truck unless there is no other seat. Then be sure the **passenger air bag is turned off** and the seat is back as far as it can go.
- If a child is old enough to use an adult seat belt and must ride in the front seat, secure the child correctly in the lap and shoulder seat belt. Move the front seat as far back as you can from the dashboard.

Car seats

- Not all car seats fit in all vehicles. When installed correctly, the car seat should not move more than one inch from side to side.
- Attend a car seat safety check in your community. These may be offered by your local health department.
- Keep harness straps snug and fasten the harness clip at armpit level. Harness straps should be at or below the shoulder level.
- When using a rear-facing infant seat, recline the car seat to keep the baby's head from dropping forward. Put the infant car seat carrying handle down.
- Infants and children should not wear heavy coats under the straps of the car seat's harness. If extra warmth is needed, use a blanket over the seat.

If your child has special needs, talk to your doctor about the safest way to travel with your child.