

Car Seat Safety



Using a car seat correctly makes a big difference. Even the right seat for your child's size must be used correctly to properly protect your child in a crash. **Local Fire Depts. will check your car seats for free! Here are car seat tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics.**

Does your car have air bags?

- Never place a [rear-facing car seat](#) in the front seat of a vehicle that has a front passenger [airbag](#). If the airbag inflates, it will hit the back of the car seat, right where your baby's head rests, and could cause serious injury or death.
- The safest place for all children younger than 13 years to ride is in the back seat regardless of weight and height.

Is your child facing the right way for weight, height, and age?

- All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat manufacturer. When infants outgrow a rear-facing-only seat, they should use a rear-facing convertible seat. Most convertible seats have limits that will allow children to ride rear facing for 2 years or more.
- Any child who has outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for his convertible car safety seat should use a forward-facing seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by his car safety seat manufacturer. Many seats can accommodate children up to 65 pounds or more.

Is the harness snug?

- Harness straps should fit snugly against your child's body. Check the car seat instructions to learn how to adjust the straps.
- Place the chest clip at armpit level to keep the harness straps secure on the shoulders.

Does the car seat fit correctly in your vehicle?

- Not all car seats fit properly in all vehicles.
- Read the section on car seats in the owner's manual for your car.

Can you use the LATCH system?

- LATCH (lower anchors and tethers for children) is a car seat attachment system that can be used instead of the [seat belt](#) to install the seat. These systems are equally safe, but in some cases, it may be easier to install the car seat using LATCH.
- Vehicles with the LATCH system have anchors located in the back seat, where the seat cushions meet. Nearly all passenger vehicles made on or after September 1, 2002, and all car seats are equipped to use LATCH. All lower anchors are rated for a maximum weight of 65 pounds (total weight includes car seat and child). Check the car seat manufacturer's recommendations for the

maximum weight a child can be to use lower anchors. New car seats have the maximum weight printed on their label.

- The top tether improves safety provided by the seat. Use the tether for all forward-facing seats. Check your vehicle owner's manual for the location of tether anchors.

Is the seat belt or LATCH strap in the right place and pulled tight?

- Route the seat belt or LATCH strap through the correct path. Convertible seats have different belt paths for when they are used rear facing or forward facing (check your instructions to make sure).
- Pull the belt tight. Apply weight into the seat with your hand while tightening the seat belt or LATCH strap. When the car seat is installed, be sure it does not move more than an inch side to side or toward the front of the car.
- If you install the car seat using your vehicle's seat belt, you must make sure the seat belt locks to keep a tight fit. In most newer cars, you can lock the seat belt by pulling it all the way out and then allowing it to retract to keep the seat belt tight around the car seat. Many car seats have built-in lock-offs to lock the belt.
- It is best to use the tether that comes with your car seat to the highest weight allowed by your vehicle and the manufacturer of your car seat. Check your vehicle owner's manual and car seat instructions for how and when to use the tether and lower anchors.

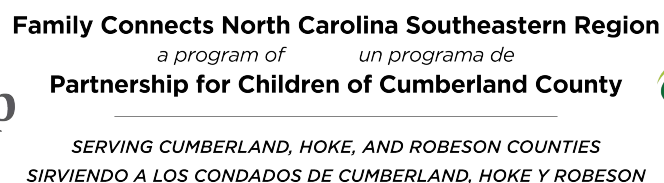
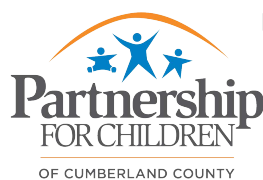
Do you have the instructions for the car seat?

- Follow them and keep them with the car seat.
- Keep your child in the car seat until she reaches the weight or height limit set by the manufacturer. Follow the instructions to determine whether your child should ride rear facing or forward facing and whether to install the seat using LATCH or the vehicle seat belt.

Do you know the history of your child's car seat?

- Do not use a used car seat if you do not know the history of the seat.
- Do not use a car seat that has been in a crash, has been recalled, is too old (check the expiration date or use 6 years from date of manufacture if there is no expiration date), has any cracks in its frame, or is missing parts.
- Make sure it has labels from the manufacturer and instructions.
- Call the car seat manufacturer if you have questions about the safety of your seat.

Source: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seat-Checkup.aspx?>



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