



Children's Health  
Education Center™

A member of Children's Hospital and Health System.



## Make sure your child is riding safely!

Car seats, booster seats and seat belts are the law in Wisconsin. Still, only 1 in 10 car seats is used correctly. Car seat information is easy to find, but often it's hard for parents and caregivers to decide which seat is best for their child. This resource can help to answer common questions about transporting children safely.

### What is required?

The Wisconsin child passenger safety law states the minimum required. Most pediatricians and injury prevention professionals recommend more than the minimum to protect children in a crash. This is called "best practice."

Type of seat	Wisconsin law	Best practice
<b>Rear-facing car seat</b>	Children must be rear-facing in a car seat until age 1 and 20 pounds.	American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children stay rear-facing until at least age 2 or longer if they are still within the weight and height restrictions of their rear-facing seat.
<b>Forward-facing harness seat</b>	Once a child is in a forward-facing car seat, he or she must remain in a harness until age 4 <b>and</b> 40 pounds.	Some seats have harness weights up to 50-80 lbs., allowing children to stay in a harness longer. Children are much better protected when restrained in a harness.
<b>Booster seat</b>	A booster seat is required once a child has graduated from a forward-facing harness seat, until the child reaches one of the following: 8 years old <b>or</b> 80 pounds <b>or</b> 4 feet and 9 inches tall.	Children should stay in a booster seat until they are tall enough to sit on the vehicle seat without slouching <b>and</b> the seat belt fits snugly across the hips, chest and shoulder. This is usually 4'9".
<b>Seat belt</b>	A seat belt is required once a child has outgrown the requirements of a booster seat. Always use a lap and shoulder belt instead of a lap belt only.	
<b>Back seat</b>	If there is a back seat, children 4 and younger need to be restrained appropriately in the back seat.	Children 12 and younger should sit in the back seat.

### Is your child in the correct seat?

- Read the owner's manual carefully to make sure your child fits within the height and weight limits.
- Most car seats have a lifespan of six years from the manufacture date.
- Fill out and send in the registration card or call the manufacturer to be sure the seat is not recalled.
- Once a car seat has been in a crash, it should not be used. There may be damage you cannot see.
- Avoid used car seats. Second-hand seats from a rummage sale or resale shop can have damaged or missing pieces that can't be seen.

### Are you using the seat correctly?

- Your child should wear thin, layered clothes. Thick clothing can prevent the harness from fitting correctly.
- Never use anything that does not come with the seat, including headrests, buntings and padding. These items are not crash-tested with your seat and could be harmful in a crash.
- Secure or store items in the trunk. Unsecured items can fly around and injure your child in a crash.
- Spot clean the seat only with mild soap and water. Let it air dry. Detergents and heat can decrease the effectiveness of

## Does your child fit in the seat?



- Harness straps come through the seat at or below the shoulders
- Straps are snug so you can only fit one finger between the child and the strap at the shoulder.
- The chest clip should be at armpit level.
- Never place a rear facing seat in front of an air bag



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- A lap and shoulder belt must be used.
- Shoulder belt lies flat on the middle of the shoulder or collarbone.
- Lap belt lies across the hips or lap not the belly.
- Child can ride that way the whole trip.



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## Is the seat in the vehicle correctly?

- The seat should move one inch or less from side to side at the belt path.
- The seatbelt or the LATCH system is being used correctly.
- Check the vehicle owner's manual for installation specifics.
- Check the car seat owner's manual for installation specifics.

## Are you using your seat belt?

- Children are more likely to buckle up if they see parent and caregivers buckled up.
- In a crash, unbuckled passengers can be a danger to everyone in the vehicle.
- Wearing a seatbelt is the law in Wisconsin.

## Are you practicing safety in and around cars too?

- Cars are not safe places for children to play.
- Children are difficult to see from the driver's seat, making back over and driver over injuries a risk.
- Children can become trapped in the trunk or power windows, or become locked a car that can quickly overheat.
- Some vehicles can be set in motion by children playing in the car.
- Every year thousands of children are treated for injuries caused by playing in or around cars.
- For more information on preventing these injuries, please visit the links below, or [www.kidsandcars.org](http://www.kidsandcars.org).

**For more information about having your child's car seat checked:**

**[www.safekidswi.org](http://www.safekidswi.org)**

**Check out these resources: [safekidswi.org](http://safekidswi.org) • [BlueKids.org/KohlsCares](http://BlueKids.org/KohlsCares) • [usa.safekids.org](http://usa.safekids.org)**