

Frequently asked questions about car seats

Can I use a second-hand car seat?

Do not use a second hand car seat when:

- The history is unknown
- It has been involved in a crash
- It has been recalled
- It is past the expiration date
- The labels are missing
- It has missing or broken parts

Can I use a car seat after a crash?

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that car seats be replaced after a moderate or severe crash. Car seats may not need to be replaced after a minor crash.

A **minor** crash is one in which **ALL** of the following apply:

- The vehicle was able to be driven away from the crash site.
- The vehicle door nearest the car seat was not damaged.
- None of the passengers in the vehicle were injured in the crash.
- If the vehicle has air bags, the air bags did not deploy during the crash
- There is no visible damage to the car seat.

How do I dispose of a used car seat?

- Check the owner's manual to see if any directions are given.
- Cut the buckle and harness straps out of the seat.
- Remove the fabric cover and anything else that will help deter from re-use.
- Write on the plastic shell, "Do not use."
- Once these steps are completed, place it in the trash.

Can I let my baby sleep in the car seat?

Death and injury can occur when babies are left in their car seat to sleep. Car seats should be used for transportation in vehicles only.

If your baby falls asleep in the vehicle, there is no need to panic. Here are some tips to help make sure your baby stays safe:

- Make sure your baby is harnessed correctly and the seat is at the correct recline.
- For long trips, make frequent stops to give both yourself and your baby a break.
- As soon as you leave the vehicle, remove the baby from the car seat and place the baby on a flat, firm sleeping surface.

Should I worry about my baby being too hot in the car?

Young children have a hard time regulating their body temperature. Their bodies heat up three to five times faster than an adult's. Dressing a baby too warmly can cause the baby to overheat.

Dress the baby in thin layers. Place blankets as needed over the baby on top of the car seat harness to protect the baby from the cold. Never place anything under the child.

When indoors or in the vehicle, remove the blankets and extra layers as needed to prevent the baby from overheating.

Can I use non-regulated products with my car seat?

A non-regulated product is an item that does not come with the car seat when purchased. These products can affect the safety of your car seat. Check the owner's manual of your car seat to see if non-regulated products can be used.

How long does my child have to ride in a rear-facing seat?

Safest recommendation: Keep children in a rear-facing car seat until at least the age of 2 or longer, and as long as they are within the height and weight requirements for the car seat. Convertible car seats allow children to stay rear-facing longer.

Wisconsin law: Children must ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are 1 year old **and** weigh 20 pounds.

How long does my child have to ride in a forward-facing seat?

Safest recommendation: Keep your child in a forward-facing car seat with a harness as long as they are within the weight and height requirements for the car seat.

Wisconsin law: Children must ride in a forward-facing car seat with a harness until they are 4 years old **and** weigh 40 pounds.

How long does my child have to ride in a booster seat?

Safest recommendation: A child should remain in a booster seat until they are at least 4'9" **or** meet ALL of the following:

- The child must be able to sit all the way back against the vehicle seat.
- The child's knees should be able to bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle seat.
- The seat belt must cross the shoulder between the neck and arm.
- The lap belt must sit low, across the child's thighs.
- The child must be able to sit like this the whole trip.

It will be much more comfortable for the child to wait until they meet all of these criteria. Otherwise, the seatbelt cuts across their neck and stomach and they tend to put it behind them, which puts them at great risk of injury in a crash.

Wisconsin law: Children must ride in a booster seat until they are 8 years old **or** weigh 80 pounds **or** are 4 feet 9 inches tall.

When can my child sit in the front seat?

Safest recommendation: Keep children under 13 years of age in the back seat using a lap and shoulder belt.

Wisconsin law: Children required to ride in a rear-facing or forward-facing harnessed car seat must be restrained in the back seat, if a back seat is available.

If a vehicle does not have a back seat, can you put a car seat in the front seat?

Safest recommendation: Use an alternate vehicle with a back seat to transport the child, make sure the child is appropriately restrained for their age/weight/height.

Wisconsin law: Children required to ride in a rear-facing or forward-facing harnessed car seat must be restrained in the back seat, if a back seat is available.

- It is never safe to put a rear facing car seat in the front seat, in front of an air bag.
- If a forward-facing child must be transported in the front seat, the child should be appropriately restrained for their age, weight, and height. The vehicle seat should be placed as far away from the dashboard with the air bag turned off.

Car seat resources and information:

chw.org/carseats

Email: carseatWI@chw.org

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