

# Why puffy coats and car seats don't mix

Puffy winter coats affect how the harness in a car seat fits your child. The extra padding added by a coat makes it impossible to get the harness to fit correctly.

Even though it might feel like the harness is snug, in a crash the extra material will compress, making the harness too loose to be effective. Loose harness straps on a car seat means there's a greater chance that in a collision your child isn't secure, which could lead to injury.

Wearing a coat also makes the car seat harness more difficult to maneuver, causing the harness to get twisted. And let's not forget that the combination of several layers of clothing, a heavy winter coat or snowsuit, and a padded car seat could lead to one overheated kiddo!



## Yes, it's worth the extra effort

It's understandable to want to just leave the coat on. Getting little ones bundled up to brave the cold temperatures can feel like an endlessly complicated task.

The thought of having to go through this each time you get in and out of the car — all while trying to keep yourself warm as well — is daunting. But it's worth the extra effort, even if you're just going for a quick jaunt around the neighborhood. Studies have shown that most crashes occur within 20 minutes or less from home and at relatively slow speeds. Motor vehicle crashes, wherever they occur, are the leading cause of death in children older than 1.

When getting ready to use a car seat in winter, put your child in thin, warm layers such as fleece or Thinsulate. For rear-facing babies in an infant seat, once the child is snug in the harness, layering blankets over the top of the harness works well. For older, rear-facing toddlers or for forward-facing children, once the child is snug in the harness you can put the coat on backward over arms and shoulders to keep them warm until the car's heater kicks in. You can even make a game out of putting on the coat backward! Also, keep a blanket in the car that can be used when the coat comes off.

## Follow these car seat safety guidelines

- For rear-facing seats, the harness height should be at or below the top of the child's shoulder.
- For forward-facing seats, the harness height should be at or above the top of the child's shoulder.
- The harness should fit snugly. Parents should not be able to pinch any slack in the harness at the shoulder. Only one finger should fit snugly between the shoulder and the harness.
- The chest clip should always be at armpit level.

### Stay warm and stay safe this winter.

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