

Booster Car Seat Safety

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Why are car seats important?

When used correctly, car seats help reduce and prevent deaths. Every state requires that infants and children ride buckled up. Annually more children are injured or die in car crashes than all childhood diseases combined. Your child should stay in a rear-facing safety seat with shoulder straps until the child is 2 years old or reaches the manufacturers maximum weight and height for their seat. Children younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car seat should use a forward facing car seat. A forward-facing car seat should be used up to the highest weight and height allowed by their car seat's manufacturer.

What is a booster seat?

Booster seats fit children up to 4 feet 9 inches tall and between the ages of 8 and 12 years. They protect the child's upper body with either the shoulder belt or with a shield. The booster raises the child so the vehicle lap and shoulder belts fit more securely and ensure the child's safety.

When do I switch my child to a booster seat?

When a child's shoulders are above the top set of straps slots, his ears have reached the top of his car seat or when your child reaches the manufacturers top weight and height allowed, you need a booster seat.

There are 2 types of booster seats:

1. A belt-positioning booster is used with a lap/shoulder seat belt. This is the recommended seat because the booster raises your child up so that the seat belt fits properly and protects your child's upper body and head.
2. Shield boosters are designed to be used with lap belts but do not provide the recommended upper body protection.

How can I be sure the booster seat is installed properly?

Car seat installation varies with the type of seat belts in the car. All car seats come with manufacturer instructions that cover the following specifications:

- Correct age and weight for the child
- Proper installation instructions

How do I know if my child is ready for a regular seat belt?

Keep your child in a booster seat for as long as possible. Your child is big enough for a regular seat when the seat belt in your car fits your child correctly. The shoulder belt should lie across the shoulder, not the neck or throat. The lap belt must be low and flat across the hips, not the stomach. The child's knees should bend easily over the edge of the car's seat. Seat belts are made for adults. If the seat belt does not fit your child correctly, a booster seat should be used until the belt fits. Some important seat belt safety tips include:

- Never tuck the shoulder belt under the child’s arm or behind the back.
- Use lap belts only as a last resort. If possible, get a lap/shoulder belt installed in your car.
- If only a lap belt is available, make sure it is worn tight and low on the hips, not across the stomach.

Be sure to complete and return the manufacturer registration card when you buy a booster seat so that if it is recalled, you will be notified.

How can I learn more about car seat safety?

Car seat safety is discussed and reviewed in *Tender Beginnings* baby care classes at Greenwich Hospital. If you have questions, contact any of the following resources:

Organization	Contact	Phone
Greenwich Hospital	“Warm Line”	203 863 3569
Web Sites Resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe Kids USA www.safekids.org ○ American Association of Pediatrics: www.aap.org 		

For more patient fact sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenwichhospital.org and click on Patients, then click Education and go to Patient Education Fact Sheets.