

# Fact Sheet



## Car Seat Safety

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The best way to keep your child safe in the car is to use the right car seat, the right way, and 100% of the time. Motor vehicle accidents are a leading cause of preventable deaths and injuries in the United States. When used correctly, child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71%. In a recent survey, 67% of Portsmouth residents feel that their child is not safe in their car seat.

### Types of Car Seats :

- **Rear-facing car seat.** This is your baby's first car seat. This can either be a **rear-facing only** seat that has an added convenience factor of a carrying handle, or a **convertible seat** that can be turned forward-facing for future use.
- **Forward-facing car seat.** When your child outgrows their rear-facing seat, either **by height or weight**, they should be moved to a forward-facing seat with a harness and top tether. This should happen after a minimum of age 2.
- **Booster seat.** Once your child has outgrown their forward-facing seat with a harness, move them to a **belt-positioning booster seat**. Booster seats raise the child so that the adult seat belt fits them properly. Children should stay seated in booster seats until the adult seat belt fits them properly, or until they are 4'9". This normally doesn't happen until age 8 to 12.

### Ohio Law :

- One thing to keep in mind regarding the law- **Ohio's** car seat laws only offer **minimal protection** for your child. Even though by law a child can sit without a car seat using the adult seat belt at age 8, **evidence-based practices** show this could be unsafe and the child is at increased risk for **death/injury** if the adult seat belt does not **fit properly**.

### Read the Label :

- Before you buy a new seat, make sure you read the label. Look for **weight and height minimums/maximums** to make sure the seat is right for your child. Remember, choosing a seat with a **higher** weight/height limit will allow you to get longer use out of the seat.

### Used Car Seats :

- **Don't** buy a **used** car seat unless you know the complete history of the seat. A used car seat is unsafe if it has been involved in a crash or if it has missing parts, labels, or instructions.

*According to various reports from NHTSA and the field, car seat, booster seat, and seat belt misuse rates vary from 74 to 90 percent.*

### Installing Your Car Seat :

- You can install the seat **either using lower anchor's or the seat belt**. One method is just as safe as the other, but cannot be used

at the same time. Once your child is forward-facing, it is important to use the tether in conjunction with the lower anchors or seat belt.



#### Installation using the seat belt :

- Place the seat belt through the car seat at the belt path. Look for arrows and directions on the car seat label to show you the correct belt path to use. Use the top tether on all forward-facing car seats. Make sure the seat belt is in “locking mode” and check for tightness. The seat should not move more than 1” from side-to-side or front-to-back when given a firm shake at the belt path.

#### Installation using LATCH :

- LATCH stands for lower anchors and tethers for children. Car seats have lower attachments that connect to the car’s lower anchor bars. Use the top tether on all forward-facing car seats. Always refer to your vehicle’s owner’s manual when determining designated positions for LATCH in your vehicle.

*Watch for lower anchor weight limits. Refer to both the car seat manufacturer’s instructions and your vehicle’s owners manual for weight*

*limits. If the weight limit is not stated, then assume it is 65 pounds. This includes the weight of the child, plus the weight of the car seat. If this weight limit is exceeded, then install the seat using the seat belt. However, you will always still use the top tether in a forward-facing seat.*

#### Getting the right fit :

- Use the correct harness slots. In **rear-facing** seats, the shoulder straps should come through the seat **at or below** your child’s shoulders. In a **forward-facing** seat, the shoulder straps should be **at or above** your child’s shoulders.
- The **chest clip** should always be positioned at arm pit level.

#### Do the “pinch test “ :

- After you buckle and tighten the harness, pinch the harness at the shoulders. If the harness is snug, your fingers will slide off the webbing. If the harness is loose, you will be able to pinch the webbing between your fingers. A loose harness is a common misuse and could result in injury in the event of a crash.
- Wearing a winter coat or bulky clothing can prevent a snug fit. This can result in possible ejection from the car seat in the event of a crash. Lightweight jackets and/or blankets are a safer option for warmth.

For more information regarding car seat safety, contact the Portsmouth City Health Department at 740-353-8863.

Other resources include :

Safe Kids Worldwide- [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration- [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)