

Right Seat. Right Use. Right Time.



1

Keep Children Rear-Facing up to Age 4 in a Seat That Fits Their Height and Weight

- Start your child in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat.
- Experts recommend keeping children rear-facing up to age 4.
- If your child outgrows their car seat before age 4, change to a seat with higher rear-facing weight and height limits.
- Leg crowding is expected and does not harm the child.

Why?

- A rear-facing car seat cradles your child and absorbs crash forces, reducing harm to neck and spine.
- Small children are more vulnerable and likely to be injured if forward facing.



2

Keep Children in Car Seats with Harnesses Until at Least Age 5

- When your child outgrows the rear-facing seat, use a forward-facing car seat with a harness and tether in the back seat.
- Use a car seat with a harness and tether until at least age 5, or until they reach the upper height and weight limits for the harness.

Why?

- Harnesses spread crash forces over strong parts of the body, keeping the child's body properly positioned in a crash.
- The tether limits head injuries by reducing car seat movement in a crash.



3

Keep Children in Booster Seats Until the Seat Belt Fits and Until 4'9"

- When your child outgrows the forward-facing car seat with harness, use a booster seat in the back seat.
- Use a booster seat until the belt fits correctly (see next step).
- A booster seat is needed until 4 ft 9 in (57") tall and the belt fits properly. Your child may be 12 years old before ready for an adult safety belt.

Why?

- A booster raises a child up so the belt rests over strong parts of the body.
- Decreases stomach, neck, and spine injuries.



4

Keep Children Belted in the Back Seat Until Age 13

- Children should use a belt in the back seat once they pass the Fit Test:
 1. The shoulder strap crosses the center of the chest and rests on the shoulder (not the neck)
 2. The lap belt fits low on the hips, touching the upper thighs (not the stomach).
 3. Knees can bend when sitting all the way back in the seat, and feet are flat on the floor.
- Use the back seat for kids under 13.

Why?

- A seat belt keeps the child inside the vehicle in a crash.
- Spreads crash forces.
- Protects head and spine.
- Back seat is safer than the front.