

Car Seat Safety Checklist for Infants

It is important to make sure the car seat for baby is safe and used the right way. It's a good idea to practice using the car seat before you put baby in it. Follow the guidelines below for baby safety.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children should face the back of the car as long as possible. Children should also use a car seat to the highest weight and length allowed by the manufacturer of the car seat.

Check the Car Seat

The car seat manual and vehicle owner's manual are the best places to check for information and tips on the car seat. Make sure:

- The car seat is right for baby's size and meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards 213.
- That there are no recalls on the car seat. You can do this by:
 - Call the manufacturer of the car seat.
 - Call the Auto Safety hotline: (888) 327-4236.
 - Check with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA): safercar.gov or nhtsa.gov.
- The car seat has not been in a crash and is not older than 6 years.
- The car seat does not have anything attached that could come in contact with baby in a crash and cause harm. This might be a tray shield, t-shield, armrest, abdominal pad, or other items.
- You understand how the seat belt and latch system locks the car seat into the vehicle.
- The car seat is put in at the right angle for baby.
- The car seat is not in front of an air bag. The safest spot is usually the middle of the rear seat.

Put Baby in the Car Seat

- Baby should not have bulky clothes, coats, snow suits, or blankets on under the harness.
 - These items will prevent a secure or snug fit in the car seat and is dangerous.
- Baby's buttocks (bottom) and back should be flat against the back of the car seat.
- The shoulder harness straps should:
 - Come out at or below the baby's shoulders (usually the lowest slots).
 - Lie flat in a straight line.
 - Should not sag or twist and should be snug. You should not be able to pinch the harness straps together.
- The harness retainer clip should be level at armpit or nipple level (not at the stomach or neck).
- Only use head supports or cushions if they came with the car seat.
- The car seat should not move more than 1 inch side to side or front to back when you hold at the belt.
- Do not leave baby alone in the car seat, in or out of the car.
- Baby should only be in a car seat when they travel in a car.

Car Seat Tolerance Screen (NOT needed for all babies)

Some babies may need a car seat test before they leave the hospital. Baby's hospital doctor or nurse will let you know if baby will need it. The parent or legal guardian will put baby in the car seat for the test, and it takes 2 hours to complete. Your nurse will give you more information if baby does not pass the test.

- **Only if told by the nurse:** place blanket rolls along the side of baby to help position them better, or take up a little room between the diaper and crotch strap so baby does not slip down.
- Do not use anything (like head supports or cushions) that did not come with the car seat.

