

# Car Seat Safety

## Stage 1: Rear Facing



Cardinal Pediatrics  
304-599-8000

### General Safety Tips

- **NO winter coats!** Remove bulky clothing and use a blanket over your child if they are cold
- **LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK**
  - NEVER leave your child alone in the car
  - Several children die of heatstroke each year
- Before buying a used car seat, check that:
  - It is NOT expired - they do have dates on them
  - It has NEVER been in an accident

**The AAP recommends children ride rear facing until they reach the height or weight limit of their car seat. For most car seats - this is at least until their 2nd birthday...and often well beyond.**

### Installation Tips

**LATCH System:** Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children

- Found in most cars built after 2002 - uses metal lower anchors located in the back seat where the seat cushions meet.
- Can be used until the total weight of child and the car seat = 65 lbs

### Using the Seat Belt

- Make sure you **CAN LOCK** the seat belt - pull the seat belt all the way out and then let it retract (you should hear ratcheting noise). You should not be able to pull it back out
- Make sure it is installed tightly - you should not be able to move it more than 1 inch side to side
- Convertible car seats have different belt paths for rear vs forward facing - make sure you are using the right one!

## STAGE 1: REAR FACING - for as long as possible!

- Because an infant's head is proportionally bigger than their body, rear facing significantly lowers the risk of serious injury
- Don't worry if your child's legs hit the back seat. Or if they have to ride with their legs crossed
- Their head must be at least 1 inch (or more) below the top of the headrest.
- Shoulder straps should be at or just below your child's shoulders (adjust straps as needed depending on car seat type)
- The harness should be snug. You should not be able to pinch the strap after your baby is strapped in. The straps should lie flat, not twisted. The chest clip should be at armpit level.
- Only place car seats in the BACK seat (front passenger air bags can cause serious injury or death).
  - The middle seat is safest, if possible, but not all cars are equipped with LATCH anchors for the middle seat.

TYPE #1 - Infant Only: Can be used from birth and are smaller and more portable (can attach to a stroller)

- Usually attached to a detachable base which stay in the car
- Depending on the model, infant car seats go up to 22-35 lbs and 26-35 inches
- Will likely need to switch to a convertible car seat by their 1<sup>st</sup> birthday

TYPE #2 - Convertible Car Seat: Can be installed rear facing or forward facing.

- Can usually be used rear facing until 40-50 lbs and until their head is 1 inch below the headrest



**304-599-8000**

**Remember we are only a phone call away!**

# Car Seat Safety

## Stage 2: Forward Facing



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### General Safety Tips

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- **LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK**
  - NEVER leave your child alone in the car
  - Several children die of heatstroke each year
- Before buying a used car seat, check that:
  - It is NOT expired - they do have dates on them
  - It has NEVER been in an accident

### Installation Tips

#### LATCH System: Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children

- Found in most cars built after 2002 - uses metal lower anchors located in the back seat where the seat cushions meet.
- Can be used until the total weight of child and the car seat = 65 lbs

#### Using the Seat Belt

- Make sure you **CAN LOCK** the seat belt - pull the seat belt all the way out and then let it retract (you should hear ratcheting noise). You should not be able to pull it back out
- Make sure it is installed tightly - you should not be able to move it more than 1 inch side to side
- Convertible car seats have different belt paths for rear vs forward facing - make sure you are using the right one!

**The AAP recommends children ride rear facing until they reach the height or weight limit of their car seat. For most car seats - this is at least until their 2nd birthday...and often well beyond.**

## STAGE 2: FORWARD FACING

Once your toddler reaches the max height or weight for rear facing on their convertible car seat, you can flip the car seat around to face forward. This will require using a different belt path for your seat belt or LATCH anchor. Be sure to consult your manual before installation.

- Straps should sit **at or just above** your child's shoulders. Chest clip should be at armpit level. Straps should be snug so that you cannot pinch the material, and should lie flat and not twisted.
- Forward facing car seats are equipped with a top tether. Always use a top tether for added security. Most new cars have built in tether anchors. These are either on the rear shelf of sedans or the seat backs of hatchbacks. In minivans they can be on the floor as well.
- **Keep your child in a 5-point harness forward facing seat for as long as possible**, until they reach the height or weight limit of your car seat. Most car seats accommodate children up to 49 inches and 65 lbs or more. Many children reach the height well before the weight.
- Your child has outgrown his forward-facing seat when the top of his or her ears reach the top of the seat. At that point, you will switch to a booster seat
- If you have a convertible car seat already, you will be able to use that car seat forward facing until your child is ready for a booster seat. If you are buying a new car seat and your child is already of the age and size to face forward, the other option is a combination forward facing seat/belt positioning booster seats. These seats start out with a 5-point harness, and as your child outgrows the harness, converts to a belt positioning booster that uses your car's seat belt.



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