

This Is the Way Baby Rides

Prepare to Ride Safely With Your New Baby

Child
Safety
Facts
2020

Car seat basics

- Your baby is safest riding in a rear-facing car safety seat (car seat) as long as possible. Being rear facing protects his head and neck in a car crash. Keep him rear facing as long as he still fits the car seat's height and weight limits. Also, check state laws.
- Babies always ride in the back seat; it is much safer than the front. Use the center rear seat if the car seat fits there. If baby *must* ride in the front seat, be sure the air bag is *off*. (See page 2.)
- Be sure the seat belt or LATCH holds the car seat tightly.
- Buckle and tighten the harness snugly over your baby's body.
- ALWAYS follow the car seat instructions and the car manual to install and use the car seat correctly.

Pack for baby's first ride:

- ✓ Car seat
- ✓ Instructions for car seat and car
- ✓ Small baby clothes with legs
- ✓ Small blankets, in case you need them to pad around baby (but never under the harness)

Warning: Car Seats Are Not Cribs!

Being in a car seat for long periods of time is not healthy for babies. Outside the car, baby should spend little time in a car seat. Always keep the harness buckled whenever baby is in the car seat.

Choosing a car seat for a new baby

What is the best car seat?

The "best car seat" is one that fits your child *and* your car. For a baby, it must face the rear of the car. Read all instructions and try the car seat out before buying it. Make sure it is easy for you to use. Be sure you can install it properly in all the cars you will use.

What kinds of car seats fit a new baby?

Use a car seat that fits your baby's length, weight, and health. Types include:

- **Rear-facing-only car seats (1):** These are small, have a handle, and fit most babies well. If a baby becomes too tall for this type before reaching the weight limit, she can keep riding rear facing by moving to a convertible car seat.
- **Convertible car seats (2):** These are larger, but many fit new babies well. (See page two for how the harness must fit.) Convertibles face the rear for babies and toddlers. Later, they can be changed to face forward.
- **Car beds (3):** Use a car bed (not shown) only if a doctor says your baby must ride lying flat for a health reason.



1) Rear-facing-only car seats are for babies up to 22 to 40 pounds.



2) Convertible car seats can face the rear for children up to 30 to 50 pounds.

What features should I look for?

Consider your car's features and the needs of other riders. Be sure the car seat has many shoulder strap positions, so you can make the straps fit well now and adjust them to fit as baby grows. A pull-strap on the front of a car seat is easier to use to snug up the harness than straps on the back are.

How else can I plan for baby?

- Go to a car seat safety class. Call your hospital or clinic to find one.
- Practice installing the car seat and adjusting the straps. Learn more from someone trained to help with car seats. (See *Resources*.)
- If your car seat has a base, leave the base installed in the car, ready for use, while at the hospital or birth center.

Can I use a second-hand car seat?

If possible, use a new car seat. It will likely be easier to use, safer, and longer-lasting. If you do use a second-hand seat, make sure it has all its parts and instructions. Check it for recalls at www.safercar.gov.

Never use a car seat that has been in a crash. Also, follow a car seat's "do not use after" date. If you can't find this date on the label, do not use the car seat if it was made more than six years ago.

Resources

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.: 800-745-7233, www.carseat.org

National Vehicle Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236, 800-424-9153 (tty), www.safercar.gov (To check for recalls, click on Search for Recalls by VIN.)

Find someone to help: 866-732-8243, www.seatcheck.org (select Inspection under Installation Help) or <http://cert.safekids.org> (select Find a Tech)

Others: www.chop.edu/carseat, www.healthychildren.org

SHARP Mary Birch Hospital
for Women & Newborns

Steps to install a rear-facing car seat

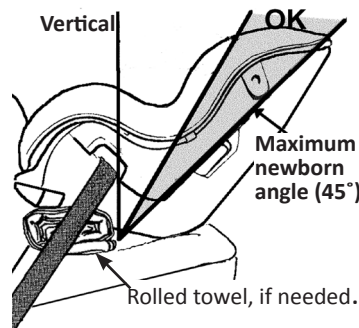
1. Place the car seat in the back seat, facing the rear window. The back seat is safer than the front seat in all cars, especially cars with front air bags.

2. Use the seat belt or LATCH strap to attach the car seat. Make it tight. If the seat belt or LATCH strap does not hold the car seat tightly, your child could be seriously hurt in a crash.

Always read the instructions that come with the car seat. Also read the sections on seat belts, LATCH, air bags, and car seats in your car manual. Do not use the lower anchors and seat belts at the same time unless both instructions say it is okay.

To check for a tight fit, hold the car seat near where the LATCH strap or seat belt goes through the car seat. Pull forward and side to side. The car seat should not move more than 1 inch. (Do not grab near the top of the car seat to check for tightness. The movement there is okay.)

3. Make sure your baby is reclined enough so his head does not fall forward. Always follow any recline guide on the car seat. Also, look for instructions that say how to adjust the car seat to make it recline. For some car seats, a firmly rolled towel or foam roll placed under the car seat may be needed to help it recline (A).



A. Baby should ride reclined. Follow car seat instructions and labels.

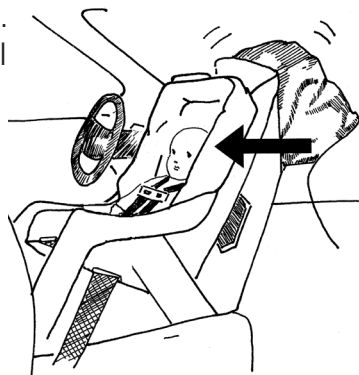
Air Bag Danger: Put Baby in Back!

A baby riding in front with an air bag (B) is in danger. In even a minor crash, the air bag may open with great force—enough to kill a child. The back seat is safer for all children.

A baby's car seat must face the rear and should be in the back seat. If baby does ride in front, the air bag **MUST** be off. Look for an on-off switch or air bag light on the dashboard.

Learn about your car's air bags in the owner's manual.

Also, read the air bag warning labels in your car.



B. Warning: An opening air bag can kill a baby!

Bringing your new baby home

Dress baby in clothes with legs so the buckle strap can go between the legs.

Put the shoulder straps in a low position, at or below baby's shoulders. Put the chest clip at armpit level.

If baby tends to slide downward, re-check the instructions to make sure the harness is set up for a small baby. You may need to add a small, rolled cloth between her crotch and the buckle strap (C).

Any support pad or insert that came with your car seat should be used, following instructions. Do not put other padding, like a blanket or add-on cushion, under or behind baby.

Tuck blankets along baby's sides to support her (C), if needed. Roll them firmly so they are not near the face.

Adjust the harness straps to fit snugly. You should not be able to pinch any slack (D). Do not use thick blankets or dress baby in heavy clothes. They make it impossible to get the harness snug enough to hold baby in a crash. In cold weather, buckle the harness *first*, and then put a blanket *over* baby.

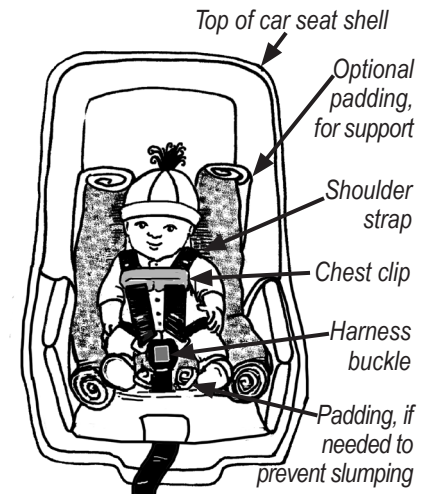
Sometimes babies cry. However, **NEVER** take baby out of the car seat while the car is moving. To hold or feed baby, park in a safe place first.

As your baby grows bigger

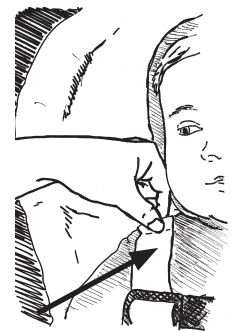
Follow instructions to make the car seat fit as baby grows. Move the harness straps up when baby's shoulders are as high as the next position. A rear-facing car seat is outgrown when:

- Baby's head is less than 1 inch from the top of the seat, or
- Baby reaches the weight limit of the car seat.

Keep baby rear facing as long as possible. This is the best way to protect a child's head and spine from injury. A baby should **NEVER** be faced forward when under 20 pounds or 1 year old.



C. Parts of a car seat. Add padding (shown) along baby's sides and behind the buckle strap only if needed.



D. Use the pinch test. If you can pinch a strap, it is not snug enough.