

Visit an inspection station

Children not in a properly installed safety seat are at risk for injury in a crash. If you're unsure how to install a car seat or want your car seat checked, visit an inspection station. A nationally certified child passenger safety technician will inspect your child safety seat and show you how to use it correctly.

For a free inspection station near you, call 1-877-330-BUCKL(2825) or visit the Buckle Up Montana! website at buckleup.mt.gov.

Montana Department of Transportation
Montana State Highway Traffic Safety Section
406-444-0809

* The information in this brochure was compiled from the Buckle Up Montana! website and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Parents Central website: www.safercar.gov/parents/index.htm.



www.buckleup.mt.gov

The Montana Department of Transportation attempts to provide accommodation for any known disability that may interfere with participation in any MDT service, program or activity. Alternative accessible formats of this material will be provided on request. For further information, call 406.444.0809, FAX 406.444-9409 or TTY 800.335.7592 (or Montana Relay at 7-1-1). 34,500 copies of this document were published at an estimated cost of \$.10 per copy, for a total cost of \$3,450.00, which includes \$3,450.00 for printing and \$.00 for distribution.

Protect your child. Child safety seat basics



Know the law

Montana law states: "If a child under 6 years of age and weighing less than 60 pounds is a passenger in a motor vehicle, that motor vehicle must be equipped with one child safety restraint for each child in the vehicle and each child must be properly restrained. The child safety restraint must be appropriate for the height and weight of the child as indicated by manufacturer standards."

Failure to comply with the child restraint law is punishable by a fine up to \$100.



Don't let your child become a statistic

- In Montana, one of the most common causes of unintentional injury death for children ages 1-14 is a motor vehicle crash.¹
- Nationwide, 3 out of 4 kids are not as safe in their vehicle as they should be because car seats are not used correctly.¹
- Nationwide, 4,028 children age 12 and younger died and an estimated 660,000 children were injured in motor vehicle crashes between 2006 and 2010.²
- Child safety seats reduce the risk of death in passenger cars by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers ages 1-4 years.²
- For children 4 to 7 years, booster seats reduce injury risk by 59% compared to use of seat belts alone.³

¹ DPHHS & MT Injury Prevention, 2000-2010

² National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

³ Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Know the 4 steps for kids

Rear-facing car seat

These include infant-only and convertible seats and are the best for a young child. It has a harness and in a crash, cradles and moves with your child to reduce stress to the child's fragile neck and spinal cord while allowing the back of the seat to absorb the crash forces.



Forward-facing car seat

This seat has a harness and tether to position your child and limit forward movement during a crash.



Booster seat

A booster seat raises your child up so the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt fits properly over the strongest parts of the body.



Seat belt

The seat belt should lie across the upper thighs and be snug across shoulder and chest. It should not rest on the stomach area or across the neck.



What is LATCH?

Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) is an alternative way to attach the child safety seat to the vehicle. LATCH has been available in most vehicles since 2002. Top Tether anchors have been available since 2000.



Birth up to 2 years

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) now recommends a rear-facing car seat until the age of 2 or until the child reaches the height or weight limits of the car seat.

Types of rear-facing car seats:

- **Infant-only:** Usually lighter and more portable than other car seats. When your child outgrows this seat, he/she should be moved into a convertible or 3-in-1 seat in the rear-facing position.
- **Convertible:** Can be either rear- or forward-facing. Typically, it has higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position.
- **3-in-1 or All-in-One:** Can be used as a rear-facing seat, forward-facing with harness, then as a booster seat without a harness.

Your child should ride in a rear-facing car seat starting with the trip home from the hospital.

Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active airbag.

Read your car seat labels and instruction manual for proper use and installation, including height, weight and age limits. Refer to your vehicle owner's manual for additional guidelines.



AGE: 2 – 4 years



Keep your child in a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible. When your child outgrows the rear-facing car seat, switch to a forward-facing car seat installed in the back seat.

Types of forward-facing car seats:

- **Convertible:** These seats convert from rear-facing to forward-facing.
- **Forward-facing only:** Used with a harness; for children weighing 22 to 40 pounds (and possibly heavier, depending on the specific seat).
- **3-in-1/All-in-One:** These seats offer parents the option of buying one seat for use as rear-facing, forward-facing, and booster.
- **Combination:** Different from the All-in-One, since it only converts from a forward-facing seat with a harness to a booster seat without a harness.

Read your car seat labels, car seat instruction manual, and vehicle owner's manual for proper use and installation.

AGE: 5 – 8 years

A child should remain in a forward-facing car seat until reaching the top height, weight or age limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer. Once your child outgrows this car seat, use a booster seat in the back seat.

Types of booster seats:

- **High-Back Booster:** Recommended if your car has a low seat back and if it does not offer any support for your child's head by the back cushion or a headrest.
- **Backless Booster:** If your vehicle's seat is high enough to support your child's head—by the seat itself or a headrest—then a backless booster seat can be used.
- **Combination/All-in-One:** Converts to a booster seat once your child reaches the height and weight limits of the forward-facing harness seat.



AGE: 8+ - 12 years



Your child should remain in a booster seat until old enough and big enough to fit in a lap and shoulder belt properly—typically between 8 and 12 years of age and about 4'9" tall.

Seat belt readiness guidelines:

- Able to keep back straight against the vehicle seat.
- Knees are naturally bent over the edge of the vehicle seat.
- Lap belt lies snugly across the upper thighs, not the stomach.
- Shoulder belt lies snug across the shoulder and chest, not across the neck or face.

Never let your child put the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. This eliminates all upper body protection and can cause severe injury in a crash.

Children should continue to ride in the back seat until they are at least 13.