

Keeping your Family Safe in the car



Buckle Up Kids
NORTH CAROLINA

www.buckleupnc.org • 800-672-4527

North Carolina law requires all passengers in a vehicle to buckle up. Children are required to use a car seat or booster seat until they are at least 8 years old or 80 pounds (whichever comes first) and the vehicle seat belt fits properly on its own. Keep children under age 13 in a rear seat of the vehicle and choose the best protection for a child based on his or her age, height and weight by following these steps:

Step 1 Rear-Facing Seats

Use rear-facing car seats as long as possible, but at least until a child is 2 years old or until he or she reaches the upper weight or height limit allowed by the child seat's manufacturer.* Most current rear-facing only and convertible seats can be used rear-facing for children up to at least 30 or 35 pounds. Check to be sure...



- ✓ The child sits facing the back of the car in the car seat and is never in front of an airbag.
- ✓ The car seat is reclined according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ The top of the child's head is more than 1 inch below the top of the car seat.

Rear-facing only car seats

- ✓ Should never face toward the front of the car.
- ✓ May fit small babies better.
- ✓ Usually have removable bases and carrying handles for convenience.

Convertible car seats

- ✓ Can be used either facing the rear or the front of the car.
- ✓ Can often be used rear-facing for children up to 40 or 45 pounds, depending on the model.

Step 2 Forward-Facing Seats

When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (by weight or height, whichever comes first), they should ride in forward-facing car seats with harnesses until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the seat.* The upper limits can range from 40 to 90 pounds, depending on the model. Check to be sure...



- ✓ The top of the child's ears are below the top of the car seat.
- ✓ The top tether strap is hooked to a designated tether anchor and pulled snug to remove slack.

Step 3 Booster Seats

Once children outgrow the harness of their forward facing seats (by weight or height, whichever comes first), they should ride in booster seats until the seat belt fits properly on its own.* Check to be sure...



- ✓ The child always rides in a booster seat using a seat belt with lap and shoulder belts.
- ✓ The lap belt sits low on the child's hips, not on the stomach.
- ✓ The shoulder belt is on the shoulder, not on the neck, under the arm or behind the back.
- ✓ The seat belt is snug, lays flat and is comfortable on the child.

** Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

Step 4 Seat Belts

Children should stay in booster seats until they are large enough for the lap and shoulder seat belts to fit properly. This usually occurs when a child is between 8 and 12 years old. If the belts do not fit properly, continue to use a booster seat. Check to be sure...



- ✓ The child always uses a seat belt with lap and shoulder belts.
- ✓ The lap belt sits low on the child's hips, not the stomach.
- ✓ The shoulder belt crosses over the shoulder and collar bone, not on the neck, under the arm or behind the back.
- ✓ The child's back fits firmly against the seat back when the knees are bent at the front edge of the seat, and that the child can sit this way for the whole ride.
- ✓ The seat belt is snug, lays flat and is comfortable on the child.

ALL children in car seats

Check to be sure...

- ✓ The child is within the age, height and weight limits specified by the car seat's manufacturer.
- ✓ The harness straps are in the right set of slots according to the manufacturer's instructions and are snug enough that you can't pinch a loop in the strap at the collar bone after it has been buckled.
- ✓ The chest clip is at armpit level.
- ✓ The car seat is secured tightly in the car and doesn't move more than 1 inch when you pull on it where the seat belt goes through it.
- ✓ The car seat is installed according to the manufacturer's instructions using either the vehicle's seat belt or LATCH system. Do not use both unless allowed by the car seat AND vehicle manufacturers' instructions.

For more information, visit www.buckleupnc.org or call the N.C. Child Passenger Safety Resource Center at 800-672-4527.



Nothing is more important to me than my children and their safety. I also care deeply about the safety of all North Carolina children. That's why I'm very honored to serve as the state chair of Safe Kids North Carolina. Please take a moment to review this information about North Carolina child restraint laws. Remember to buckle up your children every time you get in the car and encourage other parents and caregivers to do the same. It's the law, and it could save a life.

— Insurance Commissioner, Wayne Goodwin

www.ncsafekids.org • www.ncdoi.com/osfm • www.ncdot.gov/programs/ghsp

