

Vehicle Safety and Children

Injuries from motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death in children aged 5 to 14 years. Many children are injured as a result of being improperly restrained when they ride in cars, vans, or trucks. Children are safest riding in the backseat of a motor vehicle.

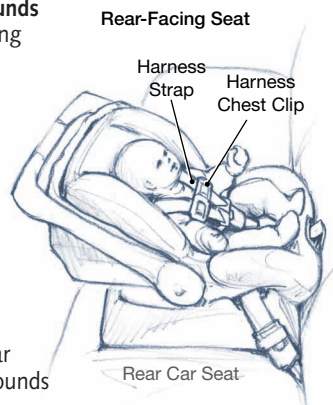
Children should never ride in the cargo bed of a pickup truck. A study report in the March 6, 2002, issue of *JAMA* concluded that children seated in compact extended-cab pickup trucks are not as safe as children seated in other vehicles.

SAFETY SEAT CHECKLIST

All children aged 12 and younger should be properly restrained in the backseat. Buy the appropriate seat for your child's age group and read all information on the seat before purchasing. Read your vehicle's manual and follow instructions for child seat installation. Using only seat belts instead of approved safety or booster seats for children can cause serious or fatal injuries. Never ride with a child seated on a passenger's or driver's lap in the front or rear seats.

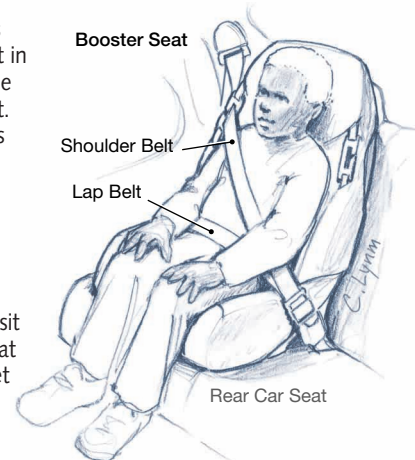
Infants from birth up to 20 pounds should ride in the backseat facing away from the front seat in an appropriate car safety seat that is attached to the rear seat safety belt.

- Harness straps in the seat should be at or below the infant's shoulders and fit snugly without any loose areas.
- The harness chest clip should be placed at armpit level.
- An infant younger than 1 year who weighs more than 20 pounds should ride in a safety seat equipped for a heavier child, also facing rear.



Children 40 to 80 pounds should ride in the backseat in a booster seat that uses the adult lap and shoulder belt.

- Belt-positioning boosters must be used with the shoulder belt snugly across the child's chest and the lap belt low across the child's thighs.
- Booster seats should be used until the child can sit back against the backseat with knees bent and feet touching the floor.



Children older than 1 year weighing 20 to 40 pounds may ride safely in a child seat strapped into the backseat and facing the front seat.

- The harness straps should be at or above the child's shoulders and should be snug.
- The harness chest clip should be at the child's armpit level.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
800/424-9393 (Auto Safety Hotline)
www.nhtsa.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics
847/434-4000
www.aap.org
- National Safe Kids Campaign
202/662-0600
www.safekids.org

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Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics, Child Passenger Safety Advocacy, National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Safety Council, National Safe Kids Campaign, Safe America Foundation

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