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**Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital**  
25 North Winfield Road  
Winfield, Illinois 60190  
630.933.1600

**Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital**  
300 Randall Road  
Geneva, Illinois 60134  
630.208.3000

TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833

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# Child Passenger Safety

Using Car Seats and Seat Belts Properly



## Use Your Car Seat Properly

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The back seat of a vehicle is the safest place for a child of any age. But the key to keeping your child safe is to correctly use a car seat that is appropriate for the child's age and size. Always follow your car seat manual and vehicle owner's manual to ensure correct use and installation.

Use either the vehicle's seat belt or LATCH system to lock the car seat tightly into the vehicle.

Get a tight fit. A car seat should not move more than 1 inch side to side/front to back when pulled at the belt path with moderate force.

Consult a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician to check for correct use.

Replace any car seat that has been involved in a crash.

Do not buy a used car seat if you do not know if it has been in a crash.

Complete and mail the car seat's registration card to receive recall notices. Recalls also may be checked by calling the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's auto safety hotline at 888.327.4236 or online at [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov).

# Car seats help ensure child safety

When driving with young children in your vehicle, there's no better way to protect them than with a car seat. In fact, when used properly, car seats can reduce injury and death in children by as much as 71 percent.\*

There are several different types of child restraint systems to help protect children. These systems include infant seats, convertible seats, combination seats, booster seats and seat belts. Using these systems correctly could save your child's life.

Studies have shown that at least 3 out of 4 car seats are not being used properly, increasing the risk of injury for countless children. Be sure to learn how to use your car seat correctly by carefully following the instructions in the car seat manual and in your vehicle owner's manual.

If you have any further questions, consult a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. To find one in your area, simply log on to [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov) or go to [buckleupillinois.org](http://buckleupillinois.org)

**Register for a Northwestern Medicine car seat class. For class times and to register, call 630.933.4234. TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833.**



## Rear-facing car seats

To help protect a baby's head, neck and spinal cord, the American Academy of Pediatrics\* recommends that all children travel rear facing until they are 2 years old or until they have reached the upper weight and height limit of their rear-facing car seat.

### Remember These Tips

NEVER put a rear-facing car seat in front of an air bag.

Rear-facing car seats include infant seats and convertible seats.

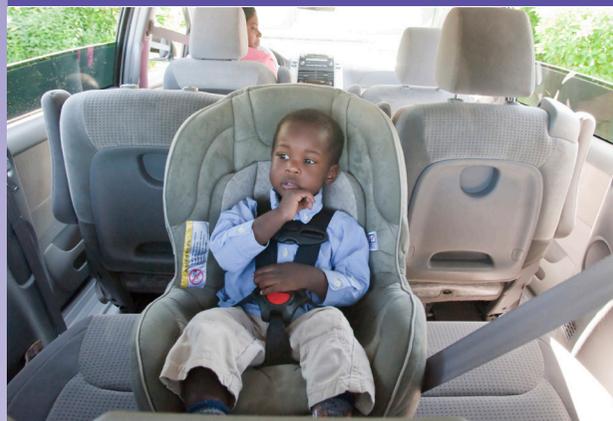
For children who have outgrown their infant seat but are not yet 2 years old, select a convertible seat that is labeled for rear-facing to 30 pounds or more.

Harness straps should be placed through slots that are at or below the child's shoulders.

Keep harness straps snug and the harness clip at armpit level.

The child's head should be at least 1 inch below the top of the car seat.

Follow the car seat instructions to obtain the appropriate recline.





## Forward-facing car seats

Children may use a forward-facing car seat when they are 2 years old or have reached the maximum weight and height limit of their rear-facing convertible seat.

Studies have shown that at least

3 out of 4

car seats are not being used properly

### Remember These Tips

Forward-facing seats include convertible seats and combination seats with a harness.

Use forward-facing seats in an upright position.

Harness straps should be placed through slots that are at or above your child's shoulders in a reinforced slot. Check the car seat instructions as only the top slots may be reinforced.

Keep harness straps snug and the harness clip at armpit level.

Children who are younger than 4 but weigh more than 40 pounds could benefit from a forward-facing car seat with harness straps labeled for greater than 40 pounds.

For added protection, use a top tether if both your vehicle and car seat are equipped for it. Follow the car seat and vehicle manuals for proper tether use.



## Booster seats

Children who are at least 4 years old and weigh more than 40 pounds may use a booster seat. Adult seat belts alone do not fit smaller children safely and could cause serious injury. Booster seats help the lap and shoulder belts fit low on the hips and snug on the shoulder. Keep your child in a booster seat until he or she is at least 4 feet 9 inches tall and has reached the maximum weight limit allowed.

### Remember These Tips

All booster seats must be used with the vehicle's lap and shoulder belt.

Backless booster seats are used for children weighing more than 40 pounds. The vehicle must have built-in head supports.

High-back booster seats offer shoulder belt adjusters and head support for use in vehicles with low seat backs.

Never let children place a shoulder belt under their arms or behind their backs.

Backpacks must never be worn while riding in the vehicle. They should be removed and placed on the floor.



## Seat belts

Seat belts are made for adults so be sure to keep your child in a booster seat until he or she has reached the maximum weight limit allowed. Your child should be at least 4 feet 9 inches tall before seeing if the adult seat belt fits properly.

### Remember These Tips

The seat belt should always fit low on the hips and snug on the shoulder.

To use a seat belt, children should be tall enough to sit with their knees bent at the edge of the seat without slouching.

Never let children place a shoulder belt under their arms or behind their backs.

Use seat belts in every seating position in the vehicle, especially for those positions near an air bag.

Children whose parents wear seat belts are more likely to use seat belts when they become drivers.

Backpacks must never be worn while riding in the vehicle. They should be removed and placed on the floor.