

A Safe Ride for Children with Special Needs

Every Child Deserves the Best Protection!



Child
Safety
Facts
2009

Introduction

Every child deserves the best possible protection from injury while riding in a car. Some state car seat laws exempt children with medical conditions. However, any child riding without a car seat, bed, or harness is at risk of injury even in a minor crash.

Your child may have a condition that affects his ability to fit in or use a regular car safety seat (car seat), booster seat, or seat belt. There are car seats that are designed and tested for most special needs. Do **not** make changes to a car seat for your child.

Conditions That May Require Special Attention

Too small

Premature and low birth weight infants are too small for many car seats. Some may need a car bed. (See the SRN Premie fact sheet, Resources.)

Some older children are much smaller than usual. Keep them in a properly fitting car seat or booster as long as possible.

Too big

Some children outgrow a regular car seat but still need support. Vests and car seats with harnesses for children over 40 pounds are available (see Resources).

Difficulty sitting upright

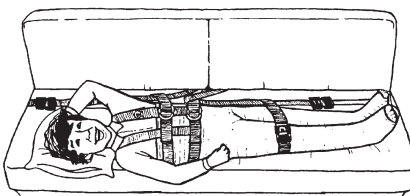
Children with neuromuscular conditions may need positioning pads to sit up well. Speciality car seats and pads may be needed.

Medical fragility

Children with conditions such as breathing problems, tracheostomy, or brittle bones may require car seats with special features.

Hip and leg casts

Casts may make using most car seats impossible. A child in a spica cast may need to use a special car seat (Spelcast or Hippo—see picture on back). A larger child in a long-leg cast can lie flat in a Modified E-Z-ON Vest (picture below). Discuss car seat fit with the doctor before casting, if possible.



Modified E-Z-ON Vest for a larger child in a cast

Impaired mobility

Some heavier children may need a wheelchair made for safe travel in a motor vehicle. (See Resources.)

Behavioral challenges:

Some children are very active. An E-Z-ON Vest that opens in the back may be used. A behavior modification plan may help.

Which car seat is right for your child?

ONLY car seats meeting federal government standards or products modified and crash tested for special needs transport should be used.

It is important to talk with a healthcare provider who works with your child and knows about car safety. See Resources on page 2 for a list of health professionals trained in special needs transportation safety.

Car Safety Basics

- ✓ Use a car seat that fits your child's weight, development, and condition. There are established methods and products for most conditions.
- ✓ Avoid modifying any car seat. If the one you have doesn't fit your child's needs, find another that does.
- ✓ **ALWAYS** follow car seat instructions and the car owner's manual.
- ✓ Make shoulder straps snug to keep the child in the seat. You should not be able to pinch slack in the straps between your finger tips.
- ✓ Install the car seat securely. Make the seat belt tight. **ALWAYS** use a tether strap, if one is available. If both vehicle and car seat have lower "LATCH" attachments, use them instead of the seat belt if they make the car seat fit tighter. Lower LATCH anchors cannot be used for children over 40 to 50 pounds (check label).
- ✓ Buckle up children in back whenever possible. The back seat is safer than the front, with or without an air bag. The center of the back is the safest.
- ✓ **NEVER** transport a child rear facing in the front seat of a car with a passenger air bag, unless the air bag has an on/off switch or sensor and the air bag has been shut off.
- ✓ Some cars have side-impact air bags in the back seat. These help protect children riding buckled up. Do not allow a child to lean against the window or door of these cars.
- ✓ The rear-facing position is the safest. Infants should ride facing the rear to at least 18 to 24 months.
- ✓ If you have questions, find a Special Needs Car Seat Technician in your area (see Resources).

Make
Every Ride
A Safe Ride



