

This educational program assists parents and caregivers in buying and using car and booster seats to keep kids safe from the first ride home until they are ready for the seat belt.

Safe Kids Canada is the national injury prevention program of The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids).



Keep your kids safe on every ride

Tips for buying and using car and booster seats



For more information on car and booster seats visit [www.safekidscanada.ca](http://www.safekidscanada.ca) or call 1-888-SAFE-TIP (723-3847).



Riding by car to school, soccer practice or the dentist's office is a part of the family routine for many kids in Canada. But vehicles are not built for kids – smaller bodies don't fit the vehicle seat or the seat belts safely.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of preventable injury and death to children aged 0 to 14.<sup>1</sup> Buying the right car or booster seat to fit your child and using it safely are the best ways to protect your child. Let us show you how.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Canada. For the Safety of Canadian Children and Youth: From Injury Data to Preventive Measures. Ottawa, 1997.

The *Kids that Click* educational program assists parents and caregivers in buying and using car and booster seats to keep kids safe from the first ride home until they are ready for the seat belt.

## Getting Started

Choosing a car or booster seat for your child can seem difficult. There are many to choose from in the store, but how do you know what type of seat is the right one to keep your child safe?

By choosing a new car or booster seat, you know for sure that it is safe for use in Canada. The seat must have a Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) label. This label is a sticker with a circle and a maple leaf.

### To get started, ask yourself these simple questions:

How tall is my child? \_\_\_\_\_ inches/ \_\_\_\_\_ centimetres

How much does my child weigh? \_\_\_\_\_ pounds/ \_\_\_\_\_ kilograms

- Height and weight are important to help you choose the right seat for your child.
- Car and booster seats are tested for safety based on heights and weights. Heights and weights are listed on the seat and on the box.

How old is my child? \_\_\_\_\_

- Always check the height and weight limits first and use age as a guideline.

Now that you have this information, it's time to choose a seat for your child.



## Stages for Safety

Children grow and change quickly and need different protection at different ages and stages. We've developed the following chart to help you choose the car or booster seat that is right for your child.

### Follow this Guide to Help Choose the Right Car or Booster Seat

Types of Seats on the Market	Rear Facing Options	Forward Facing Options	Booster Seat Options
	Always use until your child is at least 1 year of age	Must use tether strap	Must use with lap and shoulder seat belt
Infant Only Seat	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Rear Facing Only</b> use until 20-22 lb. (9-10 kg) or until 26-29 in. (66-74 cm)</p>		
2 in 1 Seat	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Rear Facing</b> use until 22-30 lb. (10-14 kg) or until 29-37 in. (74-94 cm)</p>	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Forward Facing</b> use until 40-48 lb. (18-22 kg) or until 40-47 in. (102-119 cm)</p>	
2 in 1 Seat		<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Forward Facing</b> use until 40-48 lb. (18-22 kg) or until 40-43 in. (102-109 cm)</p>	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used as a Booster Seat</b> use until 80-100 lb. (36-45 kg) or until 50-57 in. (127-145 cm)</p>
3 in 1 Seat	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Rear Facing</b> use until 30 lb. (14 kg) or until 32 in. (81 cm)</p>	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used Forward Facing</b> use until 40 lb. (18 kg) or until 40 in. (102 cm)</p>	<p>-----</p> <p><b>Used as a Booster Seat</b> use until 80 lb. (36 kg) or until 52 in. (132 cm)</p>
Booster Seat			<p>-----</p> <p><b>Booster Seat:</b> High Back and No Back use until 80-100 lb. (36-45 kg) or until 52-57 in. (132-145 cm)</p>

**ALWAYS FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURER'S WEIGHT AND HEIGHT LIMITS**

## Stage 1 - Rear Facing Car Seat

*Up to 30 pounds (14 kilograms), up to 37 inches (94 centimetres), and from birth until at least 1 year of age*

- A newborn is safest in an infant only rear facing car seat.
- A child in a rear facing car seat always faces the back of the car.
- A rear facing car seat uses harness straps over the shoulders and legs to hold your child in the seat tightly. The harness straps act as the seat belt for your child.
- A rear facing car seat is needed because your child is fragile and needs lots of protection. It is designed so that if you are in a sudden stop or a crash, the pressure will be put along your child's back -the strongest part of her body.
- The longer you can keep your child in a rear facing car seat, within the height or weight limit of the seat, the safer your child will be.

There are three types of rear facing car seats.

**Infant only seat is used as:**  
a **rear facing car seat** only



**Height:** Use until 26 or 29 inches (66 or 74 centimetres) depending on the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 20 or 22 pounds (9 or 10 kilograms) depending on the brand.

**Age:** Use from birth until at least age 1. Keep your baby in this seat as long as she is not over the height or weight limit. It is common for babies to outgrow an infant only seat before the age of 1.

**2 in 1 seat can be used as:**  
a **rear facing car seat** and  
a forward facing seat



**Height:** Use until 29 to 37 inches (74 to 94 centimetres) depending on the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 22 or 30 pounds (10 or 14 kilograms) depending on the brand.

**Age:** Use from the time your child outgrows the infant only seat. 2 in 1 seats can be used from birth but it is safest to use an infant only seat first until at least 1 year of age.

**3 in 1 seat can be used as:**  
a **rear facing car seat**, a forward  
facing car seat and a booster seat



**Height:** Use until 32 inches (81 centimetres).

**Weight:** Use until 30 pounds (14 kilograms).

**Age:** Use from the time your child outgrows the infant only seat. 3 in 1 seats can be used from birth but it is safest to use an infant only seat first until at least 1 year of age.

## Stage 2 – Forward Facing Car Seat

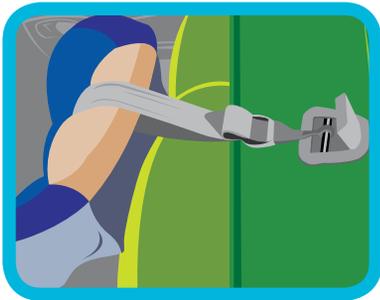
*Up to 48 pounds (22 kilograms), up to 47 inches (119 centimetres), and from at least 1 year until between the ages 4 and 5 depending on your child's size.*



- A child in a forward facing seat faces the front of the car.
- A forward facing car seat uses harness straps over the shoulders and legs to hold your child in tight. The harness straps act as the seat belt for your child. The best choice is a seat with a 5-point harness. A 5-point harness has straps over the shoulders and over both legs.



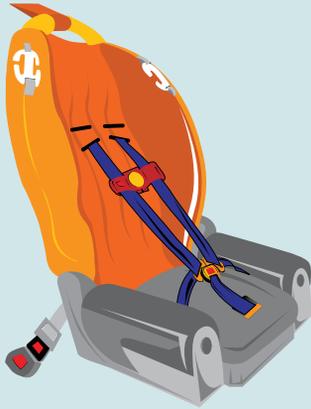
- A forward facing car seat is designed for children who have had at least 1 year to let their spines, bones and muscles grow strong. When the body is stronger it can take the pressure of a sudden stop or crash with less risk of serious injury.
- Use a tether strap with a forward facing car seat to provide the extra protection that is needed for children who are ready to ride forward facing.



- A tether strap is attached to the car seat and is connected to your car. Check your owner's manual to find out where the tether anchor is located. If your vehicle does not have a tether location, contact the vehicle dealership to have one professionally installed.
- Never use a tether strap with a rear facing car seat, unless the manufacturers' instructions say it is safe. Using a tether strap for a rear facing seat could harm your child.

There are three types of forward facing car seats.

**2 in 1 seat can be used as:**  
a rear facing car seat and a  
**forward facing car seat**



**2 in 1 seat can be used as:**  
a **forward facing car seat** and  
a booster seat



**3 in 1 seat can be used as:**  
a rear facing car seat, a **forward  
facing car seat** and a booster seat



**Height:** Use until 40 or 47 inches  
(102 or 119 centimetres) depending  
on the brand.

**Height:** Use until 40 or 43 inches  
(102 or 109 centimetres) depending  
on the brand.

**Height:** Use until 40 inches  
(102 centimetres).

**Weight:** Use until 40 or 48 pounds  
(18 or 22 kilograms) depending on  
the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 40 to 48 pounds  
(18 to 22 kilograms) depending on  
the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 40 pounds  
(18 kilograms).

**Age:** Use only once child is at least  
1 year old and too big for a rear  
facing seat. Most children outgrow  
a forward facing seat at 4 or 5  
years old.

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## Stage 3 – Booster Seat

*Up to at least 80 pounds (36 kilograms), up to 57 inches (145 centimetres) and from the age of about 4 or 5 years to about the age of 9 years.*



- A booster seat lifts your child up so that the seat belt fits correctly, for safety. Seat belts are made to fit people at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall (145 centimetres).
- A child in a booster seat faces the front of the vehicle.
- Putting your child in a seat belt before a child is big enough will put him at risk for serious injury or death in a crash. “Seat-belt syndrome” is how doctors describe injuries to the spine and internal organs that can happen when a too-small child is in a seat belt only.
- In a booster seat, the seat belt fits across the chest bone and hip bones for safety because these are the strongest parts of the body. In a crash, the bones absorb the impact instead of the soft tissues and organs.
- A booster seat does not use harness straps. The vehicle’s seat belt is used to hold your child in place in a crash or sudden stop.
- Some provinces in Canada have a law requiring booster seats. Check your Ministry of Transportation for details of the law. Even if your province or territory does not yet have a law, children need a booster seat to be safe.
- All new booster seats must be used with the lap and shoulder belt in the vehicle.

There are four types of booster seats.

**2 in 1 seat can be used as:** a forward facing car seat and a **booster seat**



**3 in 1 seat can be used as:** a rear facing car seat, a forward facing car seat and a **booster seat**

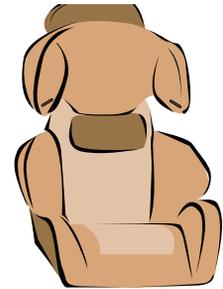


**No back booster seat can be used as:** a **booster seat**

*Only use a no back booster seat in a vehicle that has headrests in the back seat.*



**High back booster seat can be used as:** a **booster seat**



**Height:** Use until 50 to 57 inches (127 to 145 centimetres) depending on the brand.

**Height:** Use until 52 inches (132 centimetres).

**Height:** Use until 57 inches (145 centimetres).

**Height:** Use until 52 to 57 inches (132 to 145 centimetres) depending on the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 80 or 100 pounds (36 or 45 kilograms) depending on the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 80 pounds (36 kilograms).

**Weight:** Use until 80 or 100 pounds (36 or 45 kilograms) depending on the brand.

**Weight:** Use until 80 or 100 pounds (36 or 45 kilograms) depending on the brand.

**Age:** Use once your child is too big for a forward facing seat. Most children outgrow a forward facing seat at 4 or 5 years.

**Age:** Use once your child is too big for a forward facing seat. Most children outgrow a forward facing seat at 4 or 5 years.

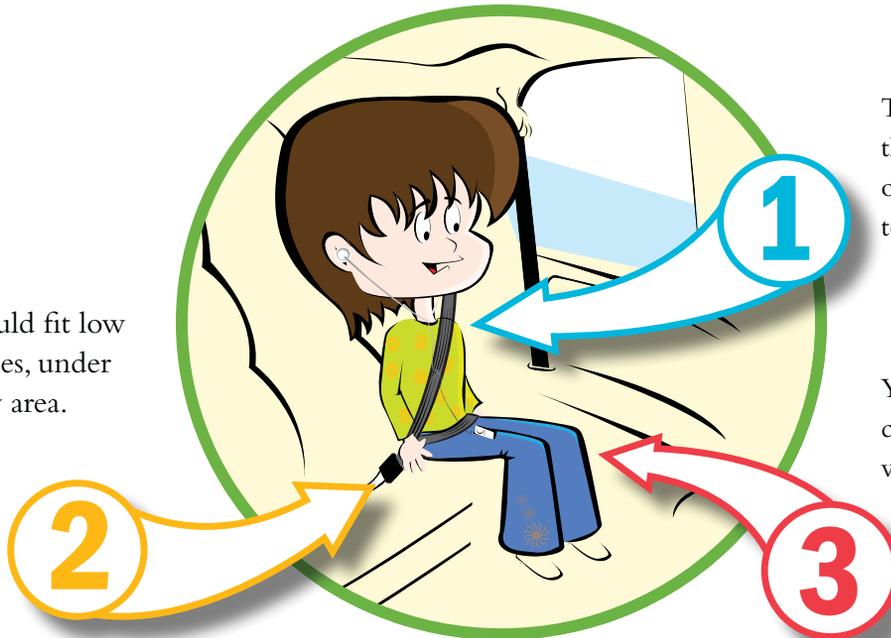
**Age:** Use once your child is too big for a forward facing seat. Most children outgrow a forward facing seat at 4 or 5 years.

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## Stage 4 - The Seat Belt

*From at least 80 pounds (36 kilograms), or 57 inches (145 centimetres) and about age 9 years.*

- Seat belts are made to fit people at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall (145 centimetres).
- Putting your child in a seat belt before your child is big enough will put him at risk for serious injury or death in a crash. “Seat-belt syndrome” is how doctors describe injuries to the spine and internal organs that can happen when a too-small child is in a seat belt only.
- Once your child has outgrown her booster seat, use a lap and shoulder belt in the rear seat of the vehicle, for safety. Children 12 years and under should always sit in the back seat – it is the safest place.
- To find out if your child is ready for the seat belt, check the way the seat belt fits your child. Have your child put on the seat belt in the vehicle and ask:
  1. Does the shoulder belt go over the shoulder and across the middle of your child’s chest? It should not touch the neck.
  2. Does the lap belt fit low over the hip bones, under the child’s belly area?
  3. Do your child’s knees bend comfortably over the edge of the vehicle seat?



The lap belt should fit low over the hip bones, under your child’s belly area.

The shoulder belt should go over the shoulder and across the middle of your child’s chest. It should not touch the neck.

Your child’s knees should bend comfortably over the edge of the vehicle seat.

**If your child does not fit the seat belt this way, he or she needs a booster seat to be safe.**

## Top Tips to Install Your Seat Safely

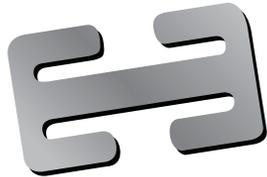
*Now that you have chosen a seat, it's time to install it in your vehicle. Review the following tips, read the seat manual and the manual for your vehicle.*

Remember that all car and booster seats should be installed in:

- the rear seat of the vehicle, away from frontal airbags.
- the centre seat position and away from all side airbags, when possible.

### Installing a rear facing car seat in your vehicle

- Decide if you are going to use the seat belt or the Universal Anchorage System (UAS), also known as LATCH, to install your seat. Read your vehicle manual to see if your vehicle has UAS and in which seating positions.
- If you are using a seat belt, read the vehicle manual to learn how to activate the locking mechanism on the seat belt. If it has a built in locking mechanism, activate the lock.
- If your seat belt does not have a built in locking mechanism, you may need a locking clip to install a car seat. A locking clip is a metal clip that comes with your car seat when you buy it.
- Find the rear facing seat belt or UAS path on the car seat or on its base.
- Put the seat belt or UAS connectors through the rear facing belt path and buckle the belt or UAS connectors.



### Securing your child in a rear facing car seat

- Harness straps should be **at or below** your child's shoulders. The harness straps should go through the harness slots on the car seat.
- Keep harness straps snug. Use the **one finger test**: no more than one finger should fit between the harness strap and your child's collarbone.
- Lock **chest clip at your child's armpit level** to keep the harness straps in place.

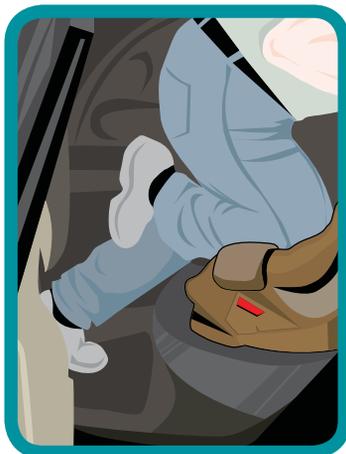


## Installing a rear facing car seat in your vehicle

- Use your knee to push your body weight onto the car seat or car seat base and pull the excess belt webbing of the seat belt or UAS system tight.

- Check for a tight installation:

hold the car seat where the seat belt or UAS connectors are secured to the vehicle. Pull the car seat from side to side and forward. The seat should not move more than one inch (2.5 centimetres) in any direction.



- If you are using an infant only seat, read the seat instructions to find out if you need to put the carry handle down.
- The seat should be secured at a 45 degree angle. If the seat is not at this angle, it needs to be reinstalled. Some seats have an adjustable part to help get the right angle – check your seat manual. If the base is not adjustable, place a rolled towel or foam “pool noodle” underneath the base, nearest to the seat belt to get the car seat to a 45 degree angle.

## Securing your child in a rear facing car seat

- Never place extra cushioning, like a head-hugger, under or behind your child unless it came with the car seat. Extra cushioning may prevent harness straps from being snug. You can place a rolled light blanket, like a receiving blanket, around your child’s head and neck for support.
- Do not use a thick snowsuit or bunting bag for your child in a car seat. They prevent the harness straps from being snug. Instead, dress your child in warm layers, like a sweater and warm sleeper. Once you have buckled your child in the seat, you can place a blanket over her – but do not cover her head.

## Installing a forward facing car seat in your vehicle

- Check to ensure the harness straps are put through the right slots of the car seat for your child's height. You can read more about harness straps in your car seat manual.
- Install the seat in an upright position following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Decide if you are going to use the seat belt or the Universal Anchorage System (UAS), also known as LATCH, to install your seat. Read your vehicle manual to see if your vehicle has UAS and in which seating positions.
- Find the forward facing belt path or UAS path on the car seat.
- Put the seat belt or UAS connectors through the forward facing belt path and buckle the belt or UAS connectors.
- Use your knee to push your body weight onto the car seat and pull the excess belt webbing of the seat belt or UAS system tight.
- Check for a tight installation: hold the car seat where the seat belt or UAS connectors are secured to the vehicle. Pull the car seat from side to side and forward. The seat should not move more than 1 inch (2.5 centimetres) in any direction.
- The tether strap should attach to the car seat at the top. Connect the tether strap to the tether anchor in the vehicle and pull to tighten.
- If your vehicle does not have a tether anchor, contact the vehicle dealership to have one professionally installed.

## Securing your child in a forward facing car seat

- Harness straps should be **at or above** your child's shoulders. The harness straps should go through the harness slots on the car seat.
- Keep harness straps snug. Use the **one finger test**: no more than one finger should fit between the harness strap and your child's collarbone.
- Lock **chest clip at your child's armpit level** to keep the harness straps in place.
- Never place extra cushioning, like a head-hugger, under or behind your child unless it came with the car seat. Extra cushioning may prevent harness straps from being snug. You can place a rolled light blanket, like a receiving blanket, around your child's head and neck for support.
- Do not use a thick snowsuit or bunting bag for your child in a car seat. They prevent the harness straps from being snug. Instead, dress your child in warm layers, like a sweater and warm sleeper. Once you have buckled your child in the seat, you can place a blanket over her – but do not cover her head.



## Installing a booster seat in your vehicle

- Remember that new booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt – they cannot be used with lap belts only.
- If you are using a booster seat that can also be used as a car seat, remove the harness straps and tether strap.
- Buckle your child in the booster seat using the lap and shoulder belt following the manufacturer's instructions.
- Some booster seats have seat belt guides to position the seat belt over your child.
- Never use a seat belt adjuster that did not come with the booster seat when you bought it. These products are not tested for government safety standards.

## Securing your child in a booster seat

- Your child should ride in a booster seat in the rear seat of your vehicle.
- The shoulder belt should rest snugly across the chest and shoulder and should not touch the neck. The seat belt should never be placed under the arm or behind your child's back – this could lead to serious injury in a crash.
- The lap belt should fit low over the hip bones, under your child's belly area. It should not rest across the tummy – this could lead to serious injury in a crash.