



Child Passenger Safety Technicians help educate parents and caregivers on the safe transportation of children in motor vehicles.

Special points of interest:

- Child Passenger Safety Seat Checks — Sept. 4, 28 & 30
- Child Passenger Safety Seminars — Sept. 9
- Drowning Prevention Seminars—Sept. 8, 10, & 29

Call 952-4536 for locations & times, or go to: <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu>

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For Safety's Sake

CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY—FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

National Child Passenger Safety Week is celebrated each September, and child passenger safety technicians nationwide hold events to educate parents and caregivers on the safe transportation of children in motor vehicles and on other safety-related issues dealing with children in and around cars. This issue of “For Safety’s Sake” will help to answer some of the questions that parents frequently have as well as those that may not be asked but need to be known.

1. What is the safest place to put my child? The safest place for all children under the age of 13 is in the backseat. Regardless of whether there is an airbag or not, placing children in the back seat reduces the chance of injury by 40 percent as compared to the front seat. The absolute safest position is the middle of the backseat, as it provides extra protection in the event of a side-impact crash. However, when installing a child safety seat in the middle, you must check with the vehicle manual to make sure a seat can be installed in that position. And, when a child will be sitting in a middle position using a seat belt, make sure there is a lap and shoulder belt available.

2. When can I turn my child forward facing? At a minimum, a child must be both 20 pounds and one year old before he faces forward. However, the longer a child remains rear-facing, the safer he will be, as the back of the seat provides head neck and spinal cord protection. Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that children remain rear-facing up to the age of two. Though most infant carriers go rear-facing to 22 pounds, several remain rear-facing up to between 32 and 35 pounds. Most convertible seats go rear-facing up to between 30 and 35 pounds, and three have been rated up to 40 pounds in the rear-facing position. If your child has exceeded the weight and height limits for his seat in the rear-facing position or if the top of his head is within one inch of the top of the seat, a new seat is needed. Many parents comment that their child’s legs touch the back of the vehicle seat. This is okay, as young children can cross their legs while riding. Another comment parents often make is that their children cry when riding rear-facing. I find that this is often the case when a child is in a seat that is too small for them, such as an older infant in a infant-only seat. Many times, when the child moves to a convertible seat with

more room, the crying stops as the child now has more room.

3. When can my child stop using a child seat? Most child safety seats that are used forward-facing with a harness go up to 40 pounds, and many of today's seats go up to even higher harness weights, anywhere between 50 and 80 pounds. The advantage of harnesses is that they connect a child's body at five points: two at the shoulders, two at the hips, and in the crotch area. The recommendation is to use your child's seat until they have reached the top limits for height and weight for their seat. Once a child has exceeded those limits, a booster seat should be used until a child can safely use a lap and shoulder belt only. This occurs when a child can: 1) sit with their backs at the back of the seat with their knees bent at the edge of the seat while 2) the lap belt sits low on the hips or thighs and the shoulder belt falls across the collar bone. This generally happens somewhere between the ages of 8 to 12 years, 80 to 100 pounds, and about 4 feet 9 inches tall.

4. Is it better to install a car seat using LATCH or the seat belt? LATCH stands for Lower Anchors and Tether for Children and is a system that was introduced in child seats and vehicles in 2002 as an alternate way to install a child seat. When used correctly LATCH and seat belts both work as effectively to install a child seat. When using LATCH, make sure that it can be used in the seating position in which you wish to install the child seat. Many vehicles have LATCH in the two outboard positions. When installing a seat in the center position, it is often necessary to install the seat using the seat belt. Check the vehicle owners manual and child seat manual to see if LATCH can be used to install a seat in the center seating position when LATCH is in the two outboard positions. Also, when

installing a child seat, choose either LATCH or the seat belt, but not both. When choosing between the seat belt and LATCH, choose the system that will provide the safest and tightest installation of the child safety seat in the position in which you wish to have the seat installed. It is also important to note that the lower anchors should not be used above the maximum weight specified by the child restraint and vehicle manufacturer, generally 40 to 48 pounds.

5. What is the best car seat? In short, the best car seat is the one that fits your child and that can be properly installed in your vehicle. When choosing a child seat, it is important to make sure you understand how to use the seat. Many seats come with extra protections, such as EPS or EPP foam sides, inserts for infants, and other features, however all seats must meet Federal Safety Standards. Try the seat out for ease of use in the store, and if possible, install the seat in the parking lot to determine if the seat will fit in your vehicle. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has developed an Ease of Use Rating for child safety seats to help parents choose the right seat for their child. The five-star system rates ease of use in the areas of: evaluation of instructions, vehicle installation features, evaluation of labels, and securing the child. To check out the Ease of Use Rating system, go onto: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> and follow the link *Child Seat "Ease of Use" Ratings*.

For more information on child safety seats, contact Gayle Whitworth at 321-952-4356 ext. 25. To schedule a child seat check, log onto our website at <http://brevard.ifas.ufl.edu> and click on the Class Registration link.

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