

# Riley Speaks

## Car Safety Seat Guidelines

Every 90 seconds, a child is seriously injured or killed in a motor vehicle crash somewhere in the United States. When used properly, safety seats are the best way to keep your child safe in a car accident. But even the “safest” seat may not protect your child in a crash unless it is used correctly. As a parent, here’s what you need to know to help keep your child safe.

### WHICH SEAT IS THE BEST ONE?

No one car seat can be singled out as the “best” or “safest.” The best one for you fits your child (age and size), fits your vehicle, is correctly installed and is used on every trip. Read and follow the car safety seat and vehicle manufacturers’ instructions for your car safety seat.

Certified child passenger safety technicians are trained in installing car safety seats properly and can help you make sure your child is as safe as possible on the road. To find an inspection station in Indiana, visit [www.preventinjury.org](http://www.preventinjury.org), or call toll free at 800-543-6227.

### THERE ARE SO MANY SEAT SIZES. WHICH KIND SHOULD I USE?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, there are some general guidelines you can follow:

- Never place a child in the front seat with a passenger-side air bag. The back seat is safer than the front seat.
- **Infants** should ride in the back seat in rear-facing car seats until they reach the highest weight or height recommended by the manufacturer of their car seat. They should remain rear facing until a minimum of 1 year of age and a minimum of 20 pounds.
- **Toddlers** should ride rear facing as long as possible. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum, age 1 and at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, with a full harness, in the back seat.
- **Children** should use forward facing child safety seats with a full harness as long as possible. Once they outgrow their forward facing child safety seats, children should use booster seats until an adult belt fits correctly – typically between 8-12 year of age when they reach about 4 feet 9 inches in height.
- **Children** who are more than 4 feet 9 inches tall are usually big enough to have the lap and shoulder belts fit correctly without a booster seat. The adult seat belt fits when the child can sit with their bottom against the vehicle seat back and their knees bend over the edge of the seat; the shoulder belt lies flat over the chest and the lap belt lies flat across their upper legs.

All children should ride in the back seat until they are at least 13 years old.



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### WHY IS THE PASSENGER-SIDE AIR BAG AN ISSUE? I THOUGHT AIR BAGS MAKE CARS SAFER.

Air bags can be dangerous for children and small adults in crashes because of the speed with which they inflate (up to 200 mph). The inflating air bag can cause head or neck injuries in children riding in the front seat. Babies in rear-facing safety seats are at the greatest risk of being killed or seriously injured by the inflating bag hitting the back of the infant's seat behind the infant's head. All infants in rear-facing car safety seats must ride in the back seat if there is an active airbag present in the front passenger position.



### WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- Continually keep track of how your child fits in the safety seat, and change seats as he or she grows.
- Make sure your safety seat hasn't been recalled. You can find out by calling the manufacturer or by contacting the Auto Safety Hot Line at 888-DASH-2-DOT (888-327-4236) or the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at [www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/recalls/childseat.cfm](http://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/recalls/childseat.cfm).
- If a car seat has been in a crash, follow the NHTSA recommendations for use of seat after a crash ([www.nhtsa.org](http://www.nhtsa.org)) or call the seat manufacturer for advice.
- Don't use the safety seat if it has been recalled, is too old (check with the manufacturer), has cracks in its frame, or is missing parts.

### WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

If you have additional questions, you may contact the Kohl's Center for Safe Transportation of Children at Riley Hospital at 800-620-0143, or visit [www.preventinjury.org](http://www.preventinjury.org).



For more information, visit [rileyhospital.org](http://rileyhospital.org)



Affiliated with Indiana University School of Medicine, Clarian Health operates Methodist Hospital, Indiana University Hospital and Riley Hospital for Children campuses as a single hospital under Indiana law.

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