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Child Car Seats: Securing Your Precious Cargo



**Manitoba
Public Insurance**

Using a child car seat correctly means you're taking one of the best steps to protect your child in a crash. Unfortunately, **eighty per cent** of child car seats are used incorrectly. If yours is one of them, your child is at serious risk in a collision.

Why using your car seat properly is so important:

- In Canada, more than 70 children (aged 12 and under) are killed and more than 10,000 injured in car crashes each year.
- Seatbelts fit people who are 4 feet 9 inches or taller and approximately 80 lbs. or more. Serious injuries can happen if a child uses a seatbelt too soon.



The provincial law requires that children be placed in the appropriate car seat until they are 50 lbs. and 5 years old. But our recommendations for car seats go even further to ensure your child has the best protection in a crash. For your child's sake, we urge you to follow our guidelines as outlined in this brochure, which are based on the federal standards for child car seat manufacturers and their use from Transport Canada.

Thank you to Child Safety Link and IWK Health Centre for their photographic contribution.



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Child Car Seat Stages

The following guidelines will help you use a child car seat properly. It's very important to follow your child car seat and vehicle owner's manuals.

Stage 1: Rear-Facing Infant Seats

Guideline: Use a rear-facing infant seat from birth until your child is 22 lbs, walking and one year old.

At this age and size, your baby's body is not strong enough to handle a crash and the neck is not able to support the head as it is thrust forward. If your baby is facing forward during a collision, serious head and neck injuries could occur. A rear-facing infant seat distributes the impact of a collision along the back of the car seat, which protects your baby's neck and head.

Check the fit:

The harness straps should fit snugly, so you can fit only one finger between your baby's collarbone and the straps. The straps should be at or below the shoulders to prevent your baby from sliding up and down in a crash. The chest clip should be at armpit level.

Stage 2: Forward-Facing Child Seats

Guideline: Use a forward-facing child seat when your child is 22 to 40 lbs., walking and more than a year old.

Forward-facing seats work well when your child's body is strong enough to withstand some of the forces of a crash. The harness straps are designed so the impact is taken where your child's body is strongest — the shoulders and chest, and then directed down to the hips. Due to the risk of serious injury, there is no need to rush to this stage.

Check the fit:

The harness straps should fit snugly, so that you can fit only one finger between your child's chest and the straps. The middle of your child's ears should not come past the top of the seat.

Stage 3: Booster Seats

Guideline: Use a booster seat when your child reaches 40 lbs. and is about four years old.

At this age and size, a seatbelt will go around your child's stomach and neck, which could cause serious injury in a crash. The booster seat lifts your child so that the belt fits correctly. In the booster seat, the seatbelt will sit around your child's hips and chest where the body can best handle the impact from a collision.

Check the fit:

When sitting in a booster seat the belt should fit across the shoulder and chest and sit low across the hips.



The middle of your child's ears should not come past the top of the booster seat or the vehicle's head restraint. Adjust the head restraint to ensure your child has adequate head and neck protection in a collision.

Stage 4: Seatbelts

Guideline: Use a seatbelt when your child is about 4'9" or 8 years old and 80 lbs. or when the seatbelt system fits your child properly.

A seatbelt is not designed for a child and you should not move your child to this stage too soon. In a crash, an ill-fitting belt could cause serious injuries. Use a booster seat until the seatbelt fits across your child's shoulders and chest and around the hips, where the body can best handle an impact.

Check the fit:

Start by having your child sit up straight. The seatbelt should fit across the shoulder and chest and sit low across the hips.

The middle of your child's ears should not come past the top of the vehicle's head restraint. Adjust the head restraint to ensure your child has adequate head and neck protection in a collision.

Tips for Safe Installation

- ✓ Refer to your child car seat and vehicle owner's manuals.
- ✓ Use a seatbelt or Universal Anchorage System (UAS) to install the seat. Do not use both.
- ✓ To install the forward-facing seat, you must use the tether on the back and secure it to the anchor on the back of your vehicle. Check your vehicle owner's manual to find the anchor. If you don't have one, see your vehicle dealer. In Canada, it's illegal not to tether a car seat.
- ✓ To ensure tightness and security of the seat, check the tension where the seatbelt is routed through the car seat. You should not be able to move it more than one inch from side-to-side.
- ✓ The safest position for a car seat is the vehicle's rear middle seat. If you have more than one child, put the youngest in the middle, as their smaller bodies are not as strong and able to withstand the impact of a crash.



When installing your child car seat:

- 1 Push hard and use your knee.
- 2 Push down on the seat and pull the belt tight.



Additional Tips

- ✓ **Is the seat the right size for your child's height and weight?** Check the limits on the child car seat and 'try on' the seat before purchasing. Check the fit of the seat frequently as your child grows.
- ✓ **You must buy your car seat in Canada to ensure it meets Canada's Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.** Look for the National Safety Mark (pictured at right).
- ✓ **Check the expiry date before purchasing.** An expired car seat may not protect your child, because over time the plastic may crack, reducing its ability to withstand a crash. Most seats are stamped with the expiry date on the back or bottom of the seat. If you can't find a date, contact the car seat manufacturer.
- ✓ **Has the car seat been recalled?** Check Transport Canada's website at www.tc.gc.ca to find out.
- ✓ **Has the seat been in a collision?** We recommend that you buy a new car seat as the impact from a crash can cause damage to a seat and may not provide adequate protection in a future collision.



Child Car Seat Inspections

To help make sure you've installed your car seat correctly, the Manitoba Child Car Seat Program provides free inspections.

In **Winnipeg**, inspections are offered through community clinics or you can drop in at the following fire stations:

- 845 Sargent Avenue
- 10 Allan Blye Drive
- 640 Kimberly Avenue
- 1710 Grosvenor Avenue
- 1057 St. Mary's Road
- 525 Banting Drive
- 1567 Waverley Street

Drop-in hours:

Monday to Friday

10:00 am – 3:00 pm and
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Saturday & Sunday

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

In **Brandon** and **Portage la Prairie**, visit your local fire department anytime for an inspection.

Portage la Prairie fire hall

- 124–3rd Street NE

Brandon fire halls

- 637 Princess Street
- 1301–13th Street

If you are located outside of these areas, contact us to find a child restraint system technician in your area.

All technicians are nationally certified through St. John Ambulance.



St. John Ambulance

For more information about child car seats, contact us:

- In Winnipeg: **985-7199**
- Outside Winnipeg: **1-888-767-7640**
- Web: **www.mpi.mb.ca**



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