

# Child car seats: Securing your precious cargo





**Your child's safety is a priority. Using a child car seat correctly means you're taking one of the best steps to protect your child in a crash.**

Knowing which car seat to use at each stage of your child's development can be confusing. The most important thing to remember is to not rush your child from one car seat stage to the next. Children should remain in their current car seat stage, whether it's a rear-facing, forward-facing or booster seat until they reach its maximum weight or height limit or the top of their head is less than 1" from the top of the car seat. This information can be found in the car seat manual or on the car seat itself.

*Provincial law requires placing children in the appropriate car seat until they're at least 145 cm (4' 9"), 36 kg (80 lbs.) or nine years old.*

## Stage 1 Rear-facing car seats

Use a rear-facing seat until your child reaches the maximum weight or height limit of the car seat. Car seats are now available to keep children rear-facing for an extended period of time. *Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. Their head and neck are still developing and research has shown rear-facing is safest.*

Rear-facing seats are the safest place for your child to be because they distribute the impact of a collision along the back of the car seat, which protects your child's fragile head and neck. It's comfortable for your child to sit with their legs bent or crossed. Once your child outgrows their rear-facing infant/ bucket seat, they should transition to a rear-facing convertible seat.

### Installation

The safest position for a car seat is the vehicle's rear middle seat but it's important to review your vehicle manual to ensure it allows installation in this position. If you have more than one child, place the youngest in the middle as their smaller bodies aren't strong enough to withstand the impact of a crash.

- Use a seatbelt or Universal Anchorage System (UAS) to install the seat. Don't use both.
- Check the tension where the UAS or seatbelt is routed through the car seat. You shouldn't be able to move it more than 2.5 cm (1") in any direction.
- At least 80 per cent of the infant car seat must be in contact with the vehicle seat.
- Check the level indicators to ensure the infant car seat is installed correctly, as per your car seat manual.



Scan the QR code to view the Manitoba Public Insurance Child Car Seat Safety video with more tips and information on installing your rear-facing car seat.

### Check the fit

- ✓ The **harness straps** should be in the slot that's **level with or below** your child's shoulders and fit snugly so you can fit only one finger between your baby's collarbone and the straps. The straps should lay flat without any twisting.
- ✓ The straps should be **at or below** the shoulders to prevent your baby from sliding out of the car seat.
- ✓ The **chest clip** should be at **armpit level**.
- ✓ Your child's head should not be less than **2.5 cm** (one inch) from the top of their car seat.

## Stage 2 Forward-facing child car seats

Once your child reaches the weight or height limit or the 1" rule of their rear-facing convertible seat, they can move into a forward-facing seat.

Look for a forward-facing seat that will meet the weight and height requirements of your child for as long as possible. Some seats are made for children up to 30 kg (65 lbs.). The harness straps in a forward-facing seat 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.

### Installation

The safest position for a car seat is the vehicle's rear middle seat but it's important to review your vehicle manual to ensure it allows installation in this position. If you have more than one child, place the youngest in the middle as their smaller bodies aren't strong enough to withstand the impact of a crash.

- The top tether strap must always be used to secure the top of the car seat to the vehicle.
- Use a seatbelt or UAS to install the seat. Don't use both.
- Check the tension where the seatbelt or UAS is routed through the car seat. You shouldn't be able to move the car seat more than 2.5 cm (1") in any direction.

### Check the fit

- ✓ The **harness straps** should be in the slot that is **level with or above** your child's shoulders and fit snugly so that you can fit only one finger between your child's chest and the straps. The straps should lay flat.
- ✓ The middle of your child's ears shouldn't come past the top of the seat.
- ✓ The **chest clip** should be at **armpit level**.



Scan the QR code to view the Manitoba Public Insurance Child Car Seat Safety video with more tips and information on installing your front-facing car seat.



## Stage 3 Booster seats

Once your child reaches the weight or height limit of their forward-facing seat and are a minimum of 40 lbs, they can move into a booster seat. Manitoba law requires children to remain in booster seats until they're at least 145 cm (4' 9"), 36 kg (80 lbs.) or nine years old. Without a booster seat, a seatbelt rides too high on a child's stomach and neck and can cause serious injuries. Research shows that booster seats compared to seatbelts alone protect children from serious injury by up to 45 per cent.\*

### How to choose a booster seat

If your vehicle **doesn't have a head restraint**, choose one of the following:

- A high-back booster seat that provides head and neck support. Some models convert from a forward-facing seat with a harness to a high-back booster seat.
- An adjustable booster seat that provides adjustable head and neck support as your child grows.

If your vehicle **has a head restraint**, choose one of the following:

- a fixed high-back booster seat
- a height-adjustable high-back booster seat
- a simple/backless booster seat

### Installation

The safest position for a car seat is the vehicle's rear middle seat but it's important to review your vehicle manual to ensure it allows installation in this position. If you have more than one child, place the youngest in the middle as their smaller bodies aren't strong enough to withstand the impact of a crash.

- Keep an empty booster seat buckled up to prevent it from moving and hitting you in a sudden stop or crash.

\* Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2010.

### Check the fit

- ✓ The shoulder strap should fit over the shoulder and across your child's chest.
- ✓ The lap belt should sit snug on their hips.
- ✓ The middle of your child's ears shouldn't come past the top of the vehicle's head restraint. The head restraint ensures your child has adequate head and neck protection in a collision.
- ✓ The bend of your child's knees should be in line with the vehicle seat.
- ✓ Never use just a lap belt to secure a child in a booster seat. Always use a shoulder and lap belt.
- ✓ Never allow your child to place the shoulder belt under their arm or behind their back as this can cause serious injury.



Scan the QR code to view the Manitoba Public Insurance Child Car Seat Safety video with more tips and information on installing your booster seat.

## Stage 4 Seatbelts

For your child's safety, Manitoba law requires children to remain in booster seats until they're at least 145 cm (4' 9"), 36 kg (80 lbs.) or nine years old. It's important not to rush to using a seatbelt alone because it's not designed for a child — the shoulder strap rides too high and could cause serious injuries.



### Check the fit

- ✓ Sitting up straight, the seatbelt should fit across your child's shoulder and chest and sit low across the hips.
- ✓ The middle of your child's ears shouldn't 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.
- ✓ The bend of your child's knees should be in line with the vehicle seat.
- ✓ Never allow your child to place the shoulder belt under their arm or behind their back as this can cause serious injury.

## Important tips about purchasing car seats

- 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 the date, contact the car seat manufacturer.
- Buy your car seat in Canada to ensure it meets Canada's Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. Car seats purchased online may not meet Canadian Safety Standards. Look for the National Safety mark (pictured).
- Check if the car seat has been recalled on Transport Canada's website at [tc.gc.ca](http://tc.gc.ca).
- Child car seats and booster seats are exempt from provincial sales tax.



## Proper placement and installation are important

A recent roadside study found that while 99% of children were buckled, 73% of car seats were used or installed incorrectly. In addition, 30% of kids in booster seats did not meet the 40 pound weight minimum requirement and 52% of kids wearing seat belts did not fit safely without a booster seat.

*\*Source: Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada*

## Quick reference guide

Use this chart to find out which car seat is best for your child.



### Stage 1. Rear-facing child car seat

Use a rear-facing car seat from birth until your child reaches the maximum weight or height limit or 1" rule. Once children outgrow their infant/ bucket seat, they should transition to a rear-facing convertible seat. *Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. Don't switch too soon as your child's head and neck are still developing.*



### Stage 2. Forward-facing convertible car seat

Once your child has outgrown their rear-facing convertible seat, use a forward-facing car seat until your child reaches the maximum weight or height limit listed on their car seat. Some seats are made for children up to 30 kg (65 lbs.).



### Stage 3. Booster seat

Use a booster seat once your child reaches the maximum weight or height limit listed on their car seat. *Provincial law requires placing children in the appropriate car seat until they're at least 145 cm (4' 9"), 36 kg (80 lbs.) or nine years old.*



### Stage 4. Seatbelt

Use a seatbelt only when your child is more than 145 cm (4' 9"), 36 kg (80 lbs.) or nine years old. Children should sit in the back seat until they are at least 13 years of age.

## Items to avoid

**After Market Products:** Transport Canada does not recommend the use of any after market products with car seats. Only items that come included in the box at the time of purchase are crash tested and safe to use with your car seat.

**Bulky Winter Coats:** Bulky winter coats and snowsuits can leave a dangerous amount of slack between the car seat harness straps and the child and should never be worn in a car seat. Alternatively, children can wear a thin, fleece sweater or be wrapped in a blanket over the top of the harness straps.

For more information about child car seat safety or to book a community presentation, please contact the Community Relations Department.

[mpi.mb.ca/community-programs/](http://mpi.mb.ca/community-programs/)

In Winnipeg: 204-985-8737

Outside Winnipeg: 1-888-767-7640



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