

Newborn Car Seat Selection & General Use

When Choosing A Car Seat:

- ♦ When purchasing a car seat (especially prior to your baby's birth), save the receipt in case you need to return the car seat for any reason.
- ♦ If obtaining a car seat from a friend or relative check the car seat over carefully. DO NOT USE IF: pieces are missing, the seat or parts are cracked or broken or the crash history cannot be determined.
- ♦ It is recommended to NOT purchase a car seat at a garage sale where the seller is unknown or at a second hand store. In these cases, the history of the seat cannot be definitively determined and if it has been in a crash, the seat is unsafe to use.
- ♦ Do not use a car seat that is older than 6 years. The manufacture's date can be found on the seat to determine the seat's age. If the labels with the date and model number are missing, the seat should not be used.
- ♦ Ensure that the seat meets federal motor vehicle safety standards. All seats are labeled with a tag stating that it meets this standard.
- ♦ Be sure to send in the registration card to ensure you are notified of recalls, etc. If the registration card has been misplaced, they can be obtained on www.nhtsa.gov.
- ♦ Remember car seat accessories (head molds sold separate from the seat, seat belt tightners, etc.) are not crash tested and should NOT be used.
- ♦ Car seats that come with a harness system are of two types, a 5-point system or a 3- point system. The 5-point system offers somewhat more protection in the event of a crash.
- ♦ Infant car seats will usually have two or three slots/positions for the harness system. It is preferable to choose one with different slots/positions rather than a seat with only one level. This is helpful to create the proper harness fit for different size babies.

When Using A Car Seat:

- ♦ READ the car seat instruction manual and your vehicle's owner's manual on seat belts & child seat installation prior to hospitalization or installation of the seat.
- ♦ NEVER place a rear-facing car seat in front of an airbag.
- ♦ ALWAYS place baby facing the REAR of the vehicle. It is recommended to place the car seat in the middle of the back seat so the baby is furthest away from where the crash may occur. You must check your vehicle instruction book as some vehicles cannot accommodate a car seat in this seating position.
- ♦ Never place any padding behind or underneath your baby when in the car seat. While it is not recommended, if you do use a head support (sometimes called a "Head's up"), make sure it has slots in it from the manufacturer for the harness straps to thread through. The better option would be to roll up receiving blankets and put along the outside edges of the seat/baby and arched over the top of the head. This system creates support without adding additional padding behind the baby. In a crash, this padding may "squish" down and then the harness system may be too loose to provide adequate protection.
- ♦ The harness retainer clip should be placed at the armpit level. This puts it across the hard breastbone (rather than over soft tummy tissue) and also keeps the straps together so the baby is not ejected from the harness system.
- ♦ Shoulder straps should be at or below shoulder level which is usually the lowest slot on the car seat for a newborn baby.
- ♦ Ensure baby's clothing is appropriate. The outfit should have legs to accommodate the harness straps.
- ♦ Snowsuits and extra padding behind the baby should not be used. It is VERY important that the harness strap fit tight against the body so that in a crash, the baby stays tightly against the seat back. This provides support to the baby's head, neck and spine and prevents injury. If there is extra padding (sheepskin, snowsuits, blankets, etc.) under the baby, it will compress down in a crash causing the harness to not be tight.
- ♦ Check harness straps to make sure they are not twisted and are properly routed.
- ♦ 4 out of 5 car seats are used incorrectly (93% of infant-style seats). This misuse can lead to serious injury and/or death. Therefore, it is recommended that you have your car seat inspected and learn how to install it from a certified car seat technician. You are encouraged to stop by the SAFE KIDS car seat check-up events prior to delivery. These are held on the second Thursday of each month from 4-7 p.m. at Rydell GM Auto Center (Collision Center) 2700 S. Washington St., Grand Forks.

