

Car seat safety tips.



Before mom's first labor pains, you need to have a car seat picked out, then figure out how to use it. And that can be hard labor, too (if you don't know what you're doing).

Here are a few tips to make choosing and using your baby's car seat a lot easier, and a lot safer.

Tips for choosing/buying a car seat:

- **Research online.** Check for safety recalls and read user reviews for help choosing the best seat.
- **Don't buy a used seat.** Only use an older seat if you know the seat's crash history (for example, it belonged to a friend or relative).
- **Read the label.** Make sure it's the right model for your child's age and size.
- **Get a seat with a 5-point harness.** With straps that go over both shoulders and hips and buckle at the crotch, the 5-point harness gives your child the best protection.
- **Register the seat.** Fill out the enclosed form or register online. Once you're registered, the manufacturer can contact you in case of safety recalls.

Tips for installing a car seat:

- **Read the manual.** Don't think, "I'll figure it out." Follow the instructions exactly.
- **Find the best spot.** The center of the back seat is the safest, but if you have multiple car seats, this may not be possible. Check your vehicle's owner manual for the recommended locations.
- **Watch a video.** If you're confused by the manual (and who isn't?), look on YouTube for an installation video of your car seat model.
- **Do the inch test.** Once installed, you should not be able to move the seat more than an inch side-to-side or front-to-back.

- **Tether all forward-facing car seats.** The tether is a strap that secures the top of the seat to an anchor in the back of your vehicle.
- **Attend an event.** Want to be positive you have it right? Attend one of the car seat safety check events presented by safety organizations or fire departments. They'll help you make sure the seat is properly installed.

Tips for using a car seat:

- **Keep seat rear-facing as long as possible.** It's safer, and most of today's seats can accommodate kids in a rear-facing position until at least the age of 2.
- **Remove coats or blankets before buckling.** The extra bulk will make the straps seem snugger than they are. Strap your child in with their coat off, then put the coat or a blanket over the top to keep them warm.
- **Do the pinch test.** Try to pinch up the strap at the shoulder. If you can get any of the material between your fingers, the straps are too loose.

One last tip: Before baby ever gets buckled in, make sure your auto insurance is up to date. If you've recently upgraded to a vehicle with more safety features in anticipation of baby's arrival, you could get discounts on your policy. Talk to an agent, today.