

**When it comes to car seat safety, most parents have one thing in common: lots of questions.** After all, how do you know what type of car seat is best for your child? Does weight or age matter more in making decisions? And is it ever ok for a child to sit in the front seat?

The Swedish Trauma Center–Injury Prevention Program can help by providing the information you need to be smart, sure and safe about car seat safety for your kids. Our team has developed this simple guide to help answer many of the questions you may have about choosing and using car seats, so you can help your child steer clear of danger at every age. Plus, all of the guidelines we provide are in accordance with Colorado state law.

So fasten your seat belt and let's get started! In no time at all, you'll be on the road to car seat safety for you and your family.

***Car crashes are the leading cause of death for children between the ages of 3 and 14 in the U.S.***

**Swedish Trauma Center** is an acclaimed referral center serving trauma and neurotrauma patients throughout the Rocky Mountain region. As a Level I Trauma Center, Swedish provides experienced physicians you can trust, a facility that provides leading-edge technology and a staff that cares for patients and families. In addition, Swedish Trauma Center provides educational outreach programs and information on a variety of trauma-related topics, including car seat safety, wheeled and pedestrian sports, adult fall prevention and seasonal activities.

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Your Roadmap to  
Car Seat Safety



**Swedish Trauma Center–Injury Prevention Program**  
***Be smart. Be sure. Be safe.***

## Why Use a Car Seat At All?

The fact is that vehicles are not designed with kid sized seats and seatbelts. This leaves children vulnerable to injury when riding in a car, particularly in the event of a crash, even minor ones. Today, in fact, car crashes are the leading cause of death for children between the ages of 3 and 14 in the U.S.

Car seats and booster seats are designed to provide proper support and protection for children while they are riding in a car. When car seats are used correctly, your children will be more comfortable in the car and less likely to be injured in a crash.

It is important to remember that all children (12 and younger) should ride in the back seat of vehicles to prevent potential injury from airbags. All children who are less than 4ft. 9 inches tall should use either a car seat or booster seat to ensure their safety.



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## Which Type of Car Seat Should You Use?

Age, weight, height and physical characteristics of your child should be considered when determining the right type of safety seat. The following categories provide some basic guidelines that can help you determine the right seat for your child. However, these are general guidelines, so be sure to always follow the manufacturer recommendation for your child's age and weight requirements for your specific seat.

### Infants & Early Toddlers: *Birth-2 years and at least 20 pounds*

- Use a rear-facing car seat, recommended for all children under 2 years old.\*

\*Keep your child rear-facing as long as possible. Recommend rear-facing until child reaches maximum weight or height requirements of car seat. Check car seat manual.

- Seat should be secured in the back seat, facing the rear of the car.

### Toddlers: *2-4 years old and 20-40 pounds*

- Use a forward-facing car seat with a 5 point harness restraint.
- Seat should be secured in the back seat but facing forward.
- The use of top tether straps is strongly recommended.\*

\*Refer to your child safety seat and vehicle owner's manual for more information.

### Younger Children: *4-8 years old and 40-80 pounds*

- Use a booster seat and the vehicle lap-shoulder belt.
- Seat should be secured in the back seat of the car.
- The lap-shoulder belt should be adjusted to fit properly and lie flat (not twisted).

### Older Children: *8 years or older and 4 ft. 9 inches tall (57")*

- Use the vehicle's lap-shoulder belt—recommended only if child passes the 5-Step Test (*see below*).
- Be sure that the belt fits correctly over the child's hips and across the middle of the shoulder.
- All children 12 and under should ride only in the back seat.

## 5-Step Test

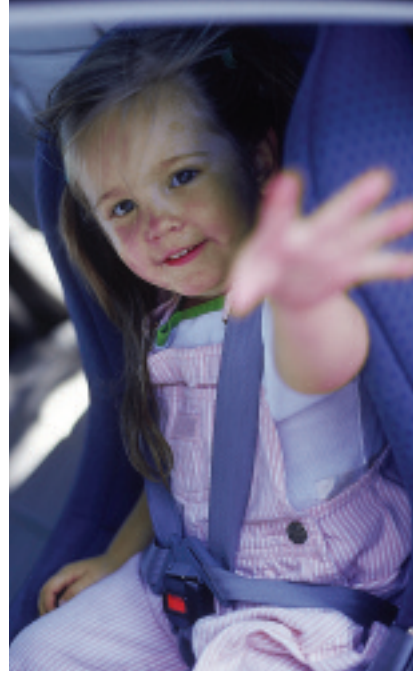
Follow these five safety checks to make sure your child is ready to use a seatbelt only. Remember, all five of these checks need to be met before your child can graduate from a booster seat to using a seat belt only.

- 1) Your child can sit all the way back against the auto seat.
- 2) Your child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat.
- 3) The shoulder belt crosses between shoulder and chest (*not the neck*).
- 4) The lap belt fits snug against the hip bones, top of thighs (*strong bones not a soft tummy*).
- 5) Your child can stay seated like this for the whole trip.

## Before You Go, Be in the Know

Here's a quick checklist of the basics in car seat safety. Be sure you know them all before you take any child in the car with you. Also be sure that anyone else driving your kids is familiar with these precautions as well.

- Buckle up, it's the law!** Be a role model, always wear a seat belt. Buckle up on every ride, in every vehicle, every time.
- If a child is 12 or younger, they need to ride in the back seat.
- Never ride in the bed of a pickup truck.
- Never play in or around cars.
- Always secure loose items! Loose items in a vehicle can turn into missiles that can injure you and others. That goes for you too! If you do not have your seatbelt on, you are likely to be ejected, injure yourself, or injure others in the vehicle.
- Choose a car seat (*child safety seat*) that fits your child.
- Use the car seat instructions and vehicle owner's manual for help installing and adjusting a seat correctly.
- Make sure the car seat fits snug in the car (*should not move more than an inch side to side*).
- If unsure if your car seat is installed correctly, visit a car seat inspection station or go to a checkup event. Visit [www.carseatscolorado.com](http://www.carseatscolorado.com)



## Be Smart. Be Sure. Be Safe.

At Swedish Trauma Center, we believe accidents are preventable. We want to make sure you have the information you and your family need to stay injury-free during every season, sport and situation. **For more information about Car Seat Safety or our other trauma prevention programs, please contact us at 303-788-5358.**

*Take me to Swedish*

**To schedule a car seat fitting at Swedish, call 303-788-7328 (788-SEAT).**