

# Boost Your Child's Safety with a Booster Seat

As a parent, you do all that you can to make sure your child is safe. Unfortunately, too many children aren't properly protected in the one place they are most likely to get hurt: automobiles.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle injuries are the leading cause of death among children in the U.S. Car safety seats are meant to keep children safe in the event of an accident, but only if the seats are used properly. In fact, one study found that 72% of nearly 3,500 observed car and booster seats were misused in a way that could be expected to increase a child's risk of injury during a crash.<sup>1</sup>

Once a child outgrows a child safety seat, many parents allow them to ride with just a safety belt for protection. However, safety belts are not designed for children. Using a booster seat raises a child up so that the safety belt fits correctly and provides adequate protection. In fact, according to researchers at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, for children 4 to 7 years, booster seats reduce injury risk by 59% compared to seat belts alone.<sup>2</sup>

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends booster seats for children until they are at least 8 years of age or 4 feet, 9 inches tall. To help you protect your child at all ages, follow these guidelines for car seat safety from the NHTSA:

## Rear Facing Seats

- Birth to one year old
- At least 20 pounds
- Back seat

## Forward Facing Toddler Seats

- Ages 1 to 4
- 20 pounds to 40 pounds
- Back seat

## Booster Seats

- Age 4 to 8
- At least 4 feet, 9 inches tall
- Back Seat

## Safety Belts

- Age 8 or older
- Taller than 4 feet, 9 inches
- Children under 12 should ride in the back seat

Keep in mind, these guidelines are recommendations from the NHTSA. It is your duty to assure you are in compliance with the child restraint laws specific to your state. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety provides a comprehensive listing of child restraint laws by state on its website. Visit <http://www.iihs.org/laws/ChildRestraint.aspx> for more information.

For more information about child passenger safety, log on to [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) and view "A Parent's Guide to Buying and Using Booster Seats."

<sup>1</sup> Department of Transportation (US), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), *Traffic Safety Facts Research Note 2005: Misuse of Child Restraints: Results of a Workshop to Review Field Data Results*. Washington (DC): NHTSA; 2006. Available from URL: [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/TSF\\_MisuseChildRestraints/images/809851.pdf](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/TSF_MisuseChildRestraints/images/809851.pdf). [cited 2008 March 19]

<sup>2</sup> Durbin DR, Elliott MR, Winston FK. Belt-positioning booster seats and reduction in risk of injury among children in vehicle crashes. *JAMA* 2003;289(14):2835-40.