



Tips for Car Seat Safety for Children 8 to 12 Years Old

Because car seats save lives, it's the law to use them. Even so, car crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for children ages 1 through 12.

For a car seat to do its job, it has to be the right one for a child's age and size. Car seats must be installed and used properly to provide adequate protection, and they must be adjusted to fit the child snugly. Your child needs the right seat at the right time, used in the right way.

Seat belts were designed for adults. Until ages 8–12, most children have not developed strong hip bones, and their legs and body are too short to allow for the proper fit of a seat belt.

Many young children do not sit still enough or straight enough to keep lap belts low across their thighs. A belt that rides up on the tummy could cause serious internal injuries. And often the shoulder belt does not fit properly, causing some children to put that portion behind their back or under their arms. These improper placements can cause serious injuries.

Booster seats are comfortable for children because they allow their legs to bend normally, and they enjoy being able to see out the window.





Children should still ride in the backseat where it is safest.

Tips for Using a Booster Seat Correctly

- Place the booster seat flat on the vehicle seat.
- Sit the child on the booster seat, place the lap and shoulder belt over the child, and buckle the seat belt.
- Adjust the lap belt so it lies snugly across the child's upper thighs, not across the tummy.
- Adjust the shoulder belt and thread through a shoulder belt positioner (if available) so that the shoulder belt lies snugly across the center of the child's shoulder. Check the seat belt fit often.
- Buckle the booster seat in the car even when the child is not in it. A loose booster seat can injure others in a crash.

Children 8–12 years old should ride in booster seats until they are big enough to fit in seat belts properly.

When Is a Child Ready for the Adult Seat Belt?

- Is tall enough to sit without slouching.
- Can keep his or her back against the seat back of the car, knees completely bent over the edge of the seat, feet flat on the floor, and stay comfortable seated this way.
- The lap belt must fit low and tight across the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest over the center of the shoulder and across the chest.
- Never put the shoulder belt under the child's arm or behind the child's back. If the seat belt does not fit properly, the child should use a booster seat.

