



## CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY

**Motor Vehicle Occupant Injuries remain one of the leading causes of death and hospitalization among children in Los Angeles County. Between 1994 and 2004, 3,322 children ages 0-12 were injured from motor vehicle occupant crashes<sup>i</sup> and another 244 died from motor vehicle occupant injuries in Los Angeles County<sup>ii</sup>. Riding unrestrained is the greatest risk factor for death and injury among child occupants of motor vehicles<sup>iii</sup>. In 2004, of all motor vehicle occupant injuries among children ages 0-12 in Los Angeles County, 25% sustained head and neck injuries, 21% traumatic brain injuries, 20% to the torso, and remaining injuries were to upper and lower extremities<sup>iv</sup>.**

**It is estimated that 82% of children who are placed in a child safety seat are improperly restrained<sup>v</sup>. According to the California Highway Patrol (CHP), more than 80% of the children, under the age of 4, that were killed in crashes since 1990 would have survived if they were buckled up in a child safety seat properly. When used properly, child safety seats can reduce the risk of fatal injury by 70% for infants<sup>vi</sup>, 55% for toddlers<sup>vii</sup>, and 59% for those riding in booster seats<sup>viii</sup>.**

### California Child Passenger Safety Law

- California Law requires children be properly secured in a child seat or booster seat until they are at least 6-years old or weighing at least 60 pounds
- California Law requires children under 16-years of age but at least 6-years old or 60 lbs to ride in a:
  - Child restraint system (car seat, booster, harness, or other product certified to meet federal safety standards) or
  - Properly fitted safety belt (lap belt touching the thighs and shoulder belt on child's shoulder, not under arm or behind back)

### Prevention Tips

- Make sure every passenger is *buckled up for safety* and all children are *properly restrained*
- *Children 12-years old and under should always ride properly secured in the back seat.* The front seat is a dangerous location and upon deployment, air bags can seriously hurt and even kill a child<sup>ix</sup>
- ALWAYS follow the child safety seat instruction manual and your motor vehicle owner's manual to ensure proper installation, then have your seat inspected at a safety seat inspection station (See Safety Seat Inspection Stations-on back)
- Contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Auto Safety Hotline (888) 327-4236 or the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (800) 638-2772 or [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov), about recalls or safety notices on child safety seats. After you purchase a new child safety seat, always return the product registration form to the manufacturer so you are notified of recalls
- Child safety seats and vehicles manufactured after September 1, 2002 are equipped with LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tether for Children). The bottom of the safety seat is connected by straps with hooks to two bars in the crack of the vehicle seat cushion. If LATCH is not available on both the safety seat and the selected seating position in the vehicle, use the vehicle belt instead. In either case, the top tether strap should be attached for forward-facing seats.

## Seating Your Child Safely

- **Infants (birth to 12-months of age)** should ride in the back seat of the car, rear-facing in an infant-only or rear-facing convertible seat until they are at least one year of age and weight at least 20 lbs. Make sure:
  - Harness straps are at or below the infant's shoulder and fit snugly against the infant without slack. You should not be able to pinch the strap between your thumb and finger
  - Harness chest clip placed at the infant's armpit level, to keep harness straps positioned properly on the infant's shoulders
  - Most babies outgrow an infant-only safety seat at 6-9 months. They should continue riding rear facing in a rear-facing convertible child safety seat rated for heavier infants (some convertible seats are rated up to 30-35 lbs rear-facing)
- **Children (1-4 years of age)** may ride in a forward-facing child safety seat. They should continue to ride in a safety seat with a harness, in the back seat of the car, until they weigh 40 lbs (usually around the age of four). Make sure:
  - Harness straps are threaded through top slots (unless instructions indicate center slots may be used for forward facing)
  - Harness straps are at or above the shoulder of child and fit snugly against the infant without slack. You should not be able to pinch the strap between your thumb and finger
  - Harness chest clip placed at the infant's armpit level, to keep harness straps positioned properly on the child's shoulders
- **Children (4-8 years of age)** must ride in the back seat of the car in a booster seat and be restrained with a lap/shoulder belt. Take the 5-Step Test below. If you answer "no" to any of the questions, your child must use a booster seat:
  1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
  2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
  3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?
  4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
  5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?
  - If your car only has lap belts (no shoulder belt) in the back seat, you cannot use a booster seat. However you can:
    - Contact the car manufacturer to see if a retrofit shoulder belt can be installed, or
    - Contact SafetyBeltSafe 800-745-SAFE or [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) for special products with harnesses for children over 40 lbs

## Safety Seat Inspection Stations

- Safety Seat Inspection stations are located throughout Los Angeles County where Nationally Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians inspect child safety seats, make sure it fits the child properly, and ensures it is installed correctly and located in the safest seat in the vehicle. To make an appointment with a certified technician in your area call 1-866-732-8243 or visit [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)

<sup>i</sup> California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Patient Discharge Data

<sup>ii</sup> California Department of Health Services, Vital Statistics Death Statistical Master File, ICD9/ICD10

<sup>iii</sup> Injury Facts, Motor Vehicle Occupant Injury, National Safe Kids Campaign [http://www.safekids.org/tier3\_cd.cfm?content\_item\_id=1133&folder\_id=540]

<sup>iv</sup> California Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Patient Discharge Data

<sup>v</sup> Injury Facts, Motor Vehicle Occupant Injury, National Safe Kids Campaign [http://www.safekids.org/tier3\_cd.cfm?content\_item\_id=1133&folder\_id=540]

<sup>vi</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Traffic Safety Facts 2000: Occupant protection Washington: NHTSA; 2001(b) [cited 2002 April 1]. Available from: URL: [www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2000/2000occfacts.pdf](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2000/2000occfacts.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Traffic Safety Facts 2000: Occupant protection Washington: NHTSA; 2001(b) [cited 2002 April 1]. Available from: URL: [www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2000/2000occfacts.pdf](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2000/2000occfacts.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> Durbin, D.R., et al. Belt-positioning booster seats and reduction in risk of injury among children in vehicle crashes. JAMA 2003 June 04; 289(21): 2835-40

<sup>ix</sup> Braver ER, Whitfield R, Ferguson SA. Seating position & children's risk of dying in motor vehicle crashes. Injury Prevention 1998;4:181-7