



STATS:

1. Motor vehicle collisions are the number one cause of death by preventable injury for Canadian children between the ages of one and nine. (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008)
2. Misuse rates range from 44% to 81% for car seats, and 30% to 50% for booster seats. (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2008)
3. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society (2008), when used correctly child seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% and risk of serious injury by 67%. Using a booster seat instead of just a seat belt alone is a reduction of 59% in injury risk.

FACTS:

1. Choose the right seat for your child's developmental stage, including weight, height, and age. There are a variety of seats to suit your child's need, including infant-only seats, seats that start off as rear-facing for young babies and switch to forward-facing when the child has maxed-out the rear-facing requirements, and forward-facing seats that become booster seats.
2. Car seats have an expiry date. If it is not listed on the label or the seat itself, you can call your manufacturer directly to get the expiry date for your model. Do not use a seat that has been in a crash, or a seat for which you don't know the history. Even if there is no visible damage, a crash can still compromise the integrity of the car seat.
3. Make sure the seat is installed securely. You can test this by grabbing the base of the seat where you have secured it at the belt path. You do not want to be able to move the seat more than an inch front and back or side to side.
4. Make sure your child is harnessed in correctly. The harness should lie flat with the chest clip at armpit level (not too far down near their belly, and not too high up near their neck). To check whether the harness is secure, do the "pinch test". Pinch the harness strap at your child's shoulder; the straps will be tight enough when you can no longer grab any excess webbing.
5. Do not rush to move your child to the next stage of car seat. As long as they meet the requirements of the seat, you can leave them in the position that the seat allows. For example, just because they have reached the minimum requirements to move into a booster seat, you should leave them harnessed until they have reached the max height/weight for the harnessed seat.
6. Keep your child rear-facing for as long as possible. It is the safest position for your child, as it protects their head and neck. Most children can stay rear facing to the age of two, and there are some seats on the market that allow for a rear-facing position for up to 40lbs.
7. Children 12 and under should stay in the back seat.
8. Don't rush to move your child out of a booster seat to a seat belt. The booster seat works to position the adult seat belt over the strong bones of the body. Children should not move into a seatbelt until they are 4'9 (145 cm). Check your provincial laws around booster seats for applicable laws and restrictions for your province. Do the following five point test to see if your child is ready for a seat belt:
 1. The child can sit all the way back against the back of the vehicle seat.
 2. The knees bend comfortably over the edge of the vehicle seat without slouching.
 3. The lap belt fits snugly across the top of the thighs and doesn't ride up on the stomach.
 4. The shoulder belt goes across the chest bone and the middle of the shoulder, *NOT* across the neck and *NEVER* behind the back.
 5. The child can sit properly for the entire trip.

