

# Trauma Talk



## Car Seat Safety: A car seat transition guide birth through adolescence

### Rear-Facing Car Seats

**Birth until they outgrow weight/height recommendations.**

- **Know your car seat!** A child should remain rear-facing in a car seat until they reach the maximum weight or height limit listed on the label. Most convertible seats have limits that allow children to ride rear-facing for 2 or more years.
- Rear-facing car seats reduce serious injuries by 92%. An infant's big head and immature spine put them at a higher risk of head and spinal injuries when not properly secured in a car seat.

### Forward-Facing Car Seats

**When they outgrow rear-facing seats.**

- Continue to use the 5-point harness while forward-facing. Straps should come through the car seat above the shoulders, whereas rear-facing straps come from below the shoulders.
- **Fit is important!** The harness should fit snugly around hips and shoulders; you should not be able to pinch the strap when the child is buckled in properly. The harness chest clip should sit high on the child's chest at armpit level.
- Avoid wearing winter coats and other bulky clothing in car seats as it will affect the fit and function of a car seat.

### Booster Seats

**When they outgrow forward - facing seat until they can sit with their back against the seat, knees bent at the edge of seat & feet flat on the floor.**

- The car's lap belt should fall on top of the legs or low on the hips.
- The shoulder belt should fit across the chest on the shoulder.
- If a child will not stay in the seat without the harness, they are not ready for a booster seat.
- **Wear your seatbelt every time!** Children mimic what they see adults doing. Everyone in the car should wear their seatbelt every time to reinforce proper habits from the start.

### Other Important Information

- All car seats involved in an accident should be thrown away and replaced.
- Car seats expire! Check the labels for expiration dates.
- Children younger than 13 years should ride in the rear seat of the vehicle.