

Fact Sheet on Booster Seats

Reasons to use a booster seat: Reduce the risk of injury and death

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and serious injury for children in Nova Scotia and across Canada. In 2003, more than 12,000 Canadian children 5-14 years of age, were injured as a result of motor vehicle crashes (Transport Canada, 2005). Approximately 35 children die each year in Canada as the result of MVCs. The IWK hospital's data indicate that between 1993 and August 2003, 220 patients between the ages of 4-9 were seen at the Emergency Department after being involved in a motor vehicle crash. Sixty five percent of these were not in a booster seat at the time of the crash. Of the 142 children who were using an adult seat belt, 83% suffered injury. Those who were in a booster seat or child restraint suffered mostly superficial injuries. (MacNeil, 2005) While the proper use of car seats has led to a reduction in injuries from motor vehicle crashes to infants and children under age 4 (45% reduction between 1994 and 2000), and the appropriate use of seatbelts for children over age 9 has led to similar improvements, injuries in MVC for children between the ages of 4-9 have declined very little (Safe Kids Canada, 2004). Children in adult seat belts instead of a booster seat are 3.5 times more likely to be significantly injured and 4 times more likely to sustain a head injury (Vehicle Occupant Safety Sub-committee, 2004). In Nova Scotia there are approximately 65,980 children between the ages of 4 and 9 years. (Statistics Canada, 2001)

Children need booster seats

- ⌘ Most children between the ages of 4 and 9 should be using a booster seat when they travel in a car.
- ⌘ Adult seatbelts are designed for adult body. (Adults over 4'11" in height) (Transport Canada)
- ⌘ Booster seats allow a child to safely use an adult seatbelt by raising the child so that the belt is positioned properly over their body. This is to protect against serious injury or death due to abdominal injury, spinal injury and ejection from the seat belt.

Rates of Use

Province wide survey by Dr. Natalie Yancher revealed that in Nova Scotia approximately 70% of children between the ages of 5 and 9 were not safely secured in a booster seat or child restraint. For children ages 7 and 8, only 18% were properly restrained in a booster seat. (Telephone survey of self-reported use) (Yancher, 2004). Roadside checks have found lower rates of booster seat use.

Why are people not using booster seats

Surveys have found that the reason most parents are not using booster seats when needed is that they do not know that their child is still in the size range for a booster seat. They are often surprised that the age, height and weight recommendations are as high as they are.

When is it safe to use an adult seatbelt?

A child is only ready for an adult seat belt when they are 4'9" tall, can sit without slouching so that their back is firmly against the vehicle seat, their knees can bend comfortably over the edge of the seat, and the seat belt is properly positioned—across the thighs, not the abdomen, with the shoulder strap positioned across the shoulder, not the neck. It is not safe to allow a child to put the shoulder strap of a seat belt under the arm or behind the back.

References:

MacNeil, M., Canadian Hospitals Injury Reporting and Prevention Program, personal communication, November 2005. Unpublished data.

Safe Kids Canada, Booster seat use in Canada: A national challenge. 2004

Statistics Canada, www.statscan.ca, 2001

Transport Canada, Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS) 208, Occupant Restraint Systems in Frontal Impacts, Seatbelt Fit Requirements (15)

The Vehicle Occupant Safety Sub-Committee, Protecting our children: A report for the road Advisory Safety Committee: The Use of Booster Seats for Children in Nova Scotia, June 2004

Yanchar, N.L. "Knowledge and practice of childhood motor vehicle restraint use in Nova Scotia." Poster presentation, 7th World Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion, Vienna Austria, June, 2004.

Fact Sheet Source:

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