

Infant and Child Safety

Booster Seats



Booster seats save lives!

Purpose of a booster seat

Booster seats are for children over 18 kg (40 lb.). A booster seat is *not* a substitute for a car seat for a child under 18 kg. New booster seats have an upper weight limit of 45.5 kg (100 lb.) to allow children up to 9 years of age to travel safely in the back seat.

Boosters allow a child to safely use an adult seat belt by raising the child so that the belt is positioned properly over their body. Until 9 or 10 years of age, a child's pelvis is underdeveloped, making it difficult to maintain correct lap belt positioning over the upper thighs. If a child's thighs are shorter than the vehicle seat cushion, this will promote slouching, causing the lap belt to ride up over the abdomen. If the lap belt rides up onto the child's abdomen, there is a risk of serious internal injury or spinal damage in a crash.

A booster seat will also raise a child so that she can see out the window. This is, in fact, a safety issue — a happy child makes a better passenger, and is less likely to fuss and distract the driver.

A child has outgrown his booster seat when he reaches 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) in height, or when the top of his ears is above the back of the vehicle seat or high back booster. This is approximately when children are between 9 and 10 years of age. Some children may not reach this height until they are older. A child has also outgrown his booster seat when he reaches the upper weight limit as is written on your seat's manual. Children who reach the upper weight limit but are still under 145 cm (4 ft. 9 in.) will need a new booster seat with a higher weight limit.

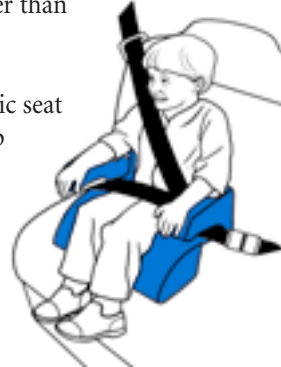


What booster seats are available?

All children are safest in the "Kid Zone", the back seat. If the rear seat of your vehicle has lap and shoulder belts, you may choose either a Backless Booster or a High Back Booster. If you have only lap belts in the rear seat, your child must use the seat belt alone. Currently, there isn't a booster available that can be used with a lap belt alone.

When using a booster seat, it is important that your child has proper head and neck support. If the top of your child's ears is above the vehicle seat back, he could be injured. If this is the case, use a High Back Booster which can be taller than the vehicle seat.

Backless Booster - a hard plastic seat with two "arms", to keep the lap belt from sliding up on the abdomen in a collision. They are used with a lap/shoulder belt. Some models come with straps to help position the shoulder belt.



High Back Booster - either moulded plastic or covered, high density foam. High Back Boosters provide head support, which is important if the vehicle seat back is low. They are used with a lap/shoulder belt and usually have a positioner for shoulder belt comfort.



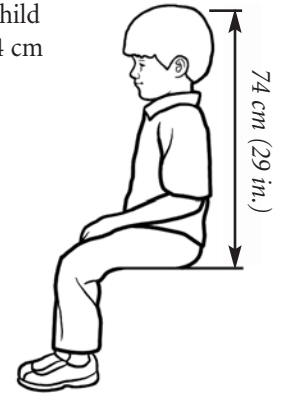
Choose a booster seat that fits your child until:

- he or she is 9 to 10 years-of-age,
- he or she has a sitting height of 74 cm (29 in.) [is at least 1.45 m (4 ft. 9 in.) tall],
- his or her knees bend comfortably over the edge of the seat when sitting back against the vehicle seat,
- the lap belt rests across the upper thighs,
- the shoulder belt is centred on the shoulder and chest, and
- your child can stay seated like this for the whole trip.

When and how to use a shoulder belt

To fit most shoulder belts, both safely and comfortably, a child needs a sitting height of 74 cm (29 in.) [is at least 1.45 m (4 ft. 9 in.) tall].

The shoulder belt should never be tucked under a child's arm. In a collision, the force of the shoulder belt in this position could break ribs, which, in turn, could damage vital organs.



The shoulder belt should never be put behind a child's back. Then, the upper body is unrestrained and the lap belt may rise above the hip bones, which could cause severe or fatal abdominal injuries.

Remember

- Booster seats, like car seats, must be put in your vehicle correctly. It is important that you always follow the instructions for *your* booster seat and vehicle. Make sure that the seat belt is snug.
- Encourage your child to sit up straight. A child slumped over the side of a booster could be injured in a sudden stop or crash.
- Using pillows, cushions, blankets, etc. to boost a child in a vehicle is dangerous. In a collision, they will compress, creating slack in the seat belt. The seat belt could then ride up on the child's abdomen, or the child could fly out of the belt altogether.
- Add-on shoulder belt positioning devices which attach to both the lap and shoulder belt are not recommended for children or adults. There are no regulations governing the production or design of these products. They can change the geometry of the seat belt, pulling the lap belt up, onto the abdomen. Crash tests, done in the U.S., have shown that they increase the likelihood of injury or death in a crash. ITSA recommends that these devices not be used. (Shoulder belt height adjusters and comfort clips, available on some newer vehicles, are acceptable.)

- Remember to fasten in the booster, even when your child is not in it. During a sudden stop, an empty, unbelted booster seat could fly around the vehicle causing injury to the driver or passengers.



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