

Car Safety for School-Age Kids

ACCORDING TO THE CDC AND WASHINGTON'S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH:

CAR CRASHES are the leading cause of FATAL INJURY for school-aged children.

The best protection comes from an appropriate, properly installed car safety seat.

Washington State Law requires:

- ✓ **children under 13 ride in the back seat**, whenever possible
- ✓ **children under age 8 / 4'9" tall ride in an appropriate car safety seat** (car seat or booster seat)
- ✓ **car safety seats must be used according to the manufacturer's instructions**

Car Seat or Booster Seat?

Even school-aged kids are safest in a 5 point harness, so keep them in their car seat until they reach the weight or height limit of the seat (whichever comes first). Most harnessed car seats are rated up to 40-50 lbs, and many are now rated to 65-85 pounds or more. Always follow the labels and instruction manuals for your child's car seat.



The next step is a booster seat, which can cost as little as \$20. High-back booster seats (pictured at left) offer whiplash and side impact protection, but backless boosters are acceptable if your vehicle has a headrest that is taller than your child's ears. Size limits vary, always follow labels and instructions.

Always use booster seats with both the lap and shoulder seat belt (never a lap belt only).

MultiCare 
**Mary Bridge Children's Hospital
& Health Center**

Center for Childhood Safety

Questions about car seats?

Call the Mary Bridge Car Seat Help Line at 253.403.1417.

multicare.org/childhoodsafety

Why a Booster Seat?

Adult seat belts are designed to protect adult bodies. Booster seats “boost” the child up so the adult seat belt fits them properly. The lap belt should fit low across the hips (touching the thighs), and the shoulder belt should cross comfortably between the shoulder and neck.

A seat belt that does not fit – cannot protect. Unboosted kids risk serious or fatal injuries to their head, neck, spine, and internal organs.

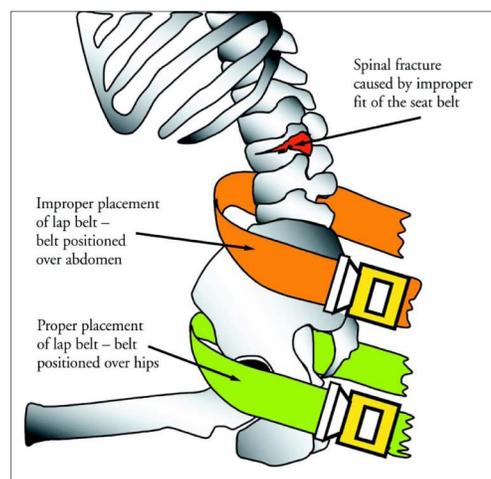


Image courtesy of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

When is a Seat Belt safe?

There is no magic age, weight, or height that can predict proper seat belt fit (without a booster) in every vehicle. Most kids will fit in most seat belts when they reach about 4'9" tall (8-12 years old).

Before moving out of a booster seat, use the Seat Belt Readiness Test in every vehicle your child rides in:

- ✓ child sits all the way back against the vehicle's seat back
- ✓ knees bend at the edge of the vehicle seat
- ✓ lap belt fits low and snug across the upper thighs
- ✓ shoulder belt lies between the neck and shoulder
- ✓ child can sit comfortably in this position for the entire ride

Back Seat or Front Seat?

Keeping kids under 13 in the back seat protects them from serious brain or spinal injury, and protects the driver from a \$124 ticket.

Body size is not relevant for riding up front, it is about the body changes that take place during puberty (like more padding on the brain, thicker skull bones, and a stronger spine). Even “adult-size” kids don't have “adult-strong” bodies.