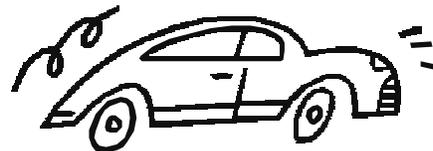


Transportation Safety



Birth through Age 4

For each well child visit, please review the following questions (Q) for parents and safety recommendations (SR) for transportation of children. Optional handouts available from the Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program TOT-SEAT Hotline are listed in each section.

Newborn/ 1 week/ 2 months

Q: Do you have a car seat?

SR: Your baby must use a car safety seat every time you travel, even for a short ride. Reading your car and car seat owner's manual will provide important information. For help call 1-888-TOT-SEAT.

Q: Is your car seat facing forward or backwards in the car?

SR: Vermont law requires babies ride backwards until at least 20 lbs. and 1 year old, but backwards until 30–35 lbs. is much safer.

Q: Does your baby's car seat ride in the front seat or back seat?

SR: Vermont law says infant seats must never ride in the path of an airbag unless the airbag is turned off. The back seat is safest for all children.

Q: Does your baby's head flop forward when sitting in the car seat?

SR: Babies need to ride reclined. If babies head flops forward the airway can close. Check the owner's manual or have the seat inspected. Call 1-888-TOT-SEAT for a free inspection.

Q: Are the harness straps snug?

SR: Car seat harness straps need to be snug with no bulky outerwear between the baby and the harness. Blankets can be put over the harness to provide warmth. Chest clip should be at armpit level.

Q: How much can you move your car seat when you grab hold at the seat belt opening?

SR: If the car seat moves more than one inch when it is buckled in the car, it is not tight enough to hold safely. Make an appointment to get car seat checked. Call 1-888-TOT-SEAT for a free inspection.

Optional handout: "This is the Way the Baby Rides" (blue)

4, 6, & 9 months

Q: What direction does your baby face when riding in the car seat?

SR: Babies must stay rear facing until at least 20 lbs. and 1 year. Parents often want to turn their babies forward facing as they become more social. Forward facing before this weight and age can result in fatal injuries. Continuing to keep your baby riding backward until 30–35 lbs. is recommended.

Q: Do you know the height and weight limit for your car seat?

SR: If baby is more than 20/22 lbs. or 26 inches the infant has outgrown the infant car seat. Parents need to consult the car seat manual for weight and height limits. Big babies need to graduate to a rear-facing convertible car seat that is rated to 30 or 35 lbs. rear facing.

Q: Where in the car does your baby ride?

SR: The back seat is safest. If your baby needs your attention, pull off the road to attend to the baby's needs.

Q: How much can you move your car seat when you grab hold at the seat belt opening?

SR: If the car seat moves more than one inch when it is buckled in the car, it is not tight enough to hold safely. Make an appointment to get car seat checked. Call 1-888-TOT-SEAT for a free inspection.

Optional handout: "Car Safety for Growing Babies from 4 -12 Months" (yellow)

1 and 2 years

Q: Does your child ride rear facing or forward facing?

SR: Children must ride rear facing until at least 20 lbs. and 1 year. Children are safer if they continue to ride rear facing in a seat that is rated rear facing to 30 or 35 lbs. The incidence of injury and fatality when riding forward facing decreases at 1 year and 20 lbs. but does not cease to exist.

Q: (For children seated forward facing) Are the slots that the shoulder straps come through higher than your child's shoulders?

SR: Most car seats require that the harness straps be in the top slots when the child is seated facing forward. Many parents do not know that this is a requirement. Parents should refer to their owner's manual or call the TOT-SEAT Hotline for assistance.

Q: Does your seat move more than an inch or could it tip over in the car?

SR: When correctly installed a car seat should sit upright and move less than one inch side to side at the seat belt opening. Using the tether strap provided with the car seat improves safety for forward facing seats.

Q: How tight are the harness straps on your child's car seat?

SR: The harness straps must be very snug so that it is not possible to pinch the webbing between your fingers.

Q: Where is the chest clip positioned when your child is buckled in the car seat?

SR: Chest clips should be at armpit level.

For children who are likely to reach 40 lbs. before their 3rd birthday, parents can call the TOT-SEAT Hotline to discuss appropriate restraints with weight limits up to 65 lbs. These children are generally not developmentally ready for a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt.

Optional handout: "Meeting the Toddler Car Seat Challenge" (gold)

3 and 4 years

Q: What kind of restraint system are you currently using in the car for your child?

SR: Children outgrow the harness system on most car seats at 40 lbs. or 40 inches. A booster seat using the car's lap and shoulder belt will be needed until an adult seat belt fits properly—at about 4'9." For children who are not developmentally ready to sit in a booster seat with a lap and shoulder belt refer the family to TOT-SEAT Hotline.

Q: Does your child refuse to use the car seat or climb out during travel?

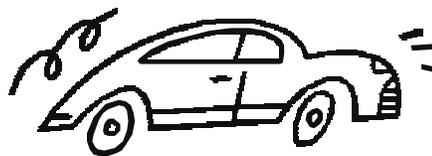
SR: Car safety should be nonnegotiable, just like playing with knives or matches. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury among children. Vermont law requires children to ride in safety seats until 8 years old.

Q: When the child sits on the booster seat, where is the shoulder belt?

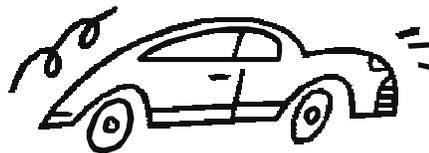
SR: The shoulder belt should be across the sternum at mid-chest and should never be placed under the arm or behind the back. Children must ride in booster seats until 8 years and should continue to use a booster seat until 4'9" tall.

Booster seats with a shield in front of them are not recommended.

Optional Handout: "Boosters, Belts, Bags & Kids" (green)



Transportation Safety



Age 5 through Age 16

For each well child visit, please review the following questions (Q) for children and safety recommendations (SR) for transportation of children. Optional handouts available from the Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program TOT-SEAT Hotline are listed in each section.

5, 6 and 7 years

(Ask the child)

Q: How do you ride in the car? Do you use a booster seat or seat belt in the car?

SR: Children need booster seats from 40 lbs. until the adult seat belt fits correctly. Using an adult seat belt too soon can result in serious or life threatening injuries.

Vermont law requires all children be in an appropriate child passenger restraint (infant, toddler, booster seat or safety harness) until 8 years. Adult seat belts begin to fit children when they are 4'9" tall.

Q: Where do you put the shoulder belt?

SR: The shoulder belt needs to be across the sternum at mid-chest and never placed under the arm or behind the back.

Children should not use devices that attach to lap and shoulder belts intended to make the shoulder belt fit properly. These devices do not meet federal safety guidelines and can cause serious injury. Booster seats provide protection, keep seat belts off the soft tummy area and boost children taller to make adult seat belts fit.

Q: Where do you sit in the car?

SR: The back seat is safest. Children under 13 should never ride in the path of an active airbag.

Optional Handout: "Boosters, Belts, Bags & Kids" (green)

8 and 9 years

(Ask the child)

Q: Do you use a booster seat or seat belt in the car?

SR: Children need to say "yes" to all 5 questions in order to use an adult seat belt. If the child answers "no," they need a booster seat to travel safely.

- 1. Do you sit all the way back against the auto seat?**
- 2. Do your knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?**
- 3. Is the lap belt below your tummy, touching your thighs?**
- 4. Is the shoulder belt centered on your shoulder and chest?**
- 5. Can you stay seated like this for the whole trip?**

Q: Where do you sit in the car or truck ?

SR: In cars the back seat is safest. Children should never be in the back bed of a pick up. Children under 13 should not sit in the path of an active air bag.

Optional Handout: "Boosters, Belts, Bags & Kids" (green)

Car Seat Hotline 1-888-TOT-SEAT

10 through 14 years

(Ask the child)

Q: Do you wear your seat belt? Where do you put the shoulder belt?

SR: The shoulder belt needs to be across the sternum at mid-chest. Never place the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. Children who want to put the shoulder belt behind their back may still need a booster seat. Use the 5 questions for seat belt fit from the 8-year-old visit.

Q: Where do you sit in the car or truck?

SR: In cars the back seat is safest. Children should never be in the back bed of a pick up. Children under 13 should not sit in the path of an active air bag.

15 years and up

(Ask the child)

Q: Do you wear your seat belt?

SR: The lap belt should be low across your hips and the shoulder belt should be on the center of your chest. Seat belts need to be buckled every time you ride in the car.

Q: Do you adjust your headrest ?

SR: The headrest should be adjusted to the center of the back of the head. This protects you from whiplash.

Q: What are the rules in your family about driving? Do you drive with your friends in the car? How many in the car at a time?

SR: Teen drivers have the highest rate of crashes and fatalities of all drivers. Distraction and peer pressure lead to risky behavior. Removing teen passengers from the vehicle decreases overall crash risk by 50%.

Q: When you are driving, how do you handle seat belts for your passengers?

SR: Encourage teens to take the lead by not starting the car until everyone is belted. According to Vermont law, the driver is legally responsible for making sure passengers are using seat belts.



Special Needs

Car seat questions and concerns for transportation of children with special health needs should be directed to Vermont's Child Passenger Safety Specialist, Michele Laberge:

Phone: (802) 241-5503 or e-mail: mlaberge@dps.state.vt.us

Vermont Law

Vermont law requires that children under 1 year of age and 20 lbs. ride rear facing. Seats may never be placed in front of an active airbag. Children 1 to 8 must be in an appropriately fitting, federally approved safety restraint (infant, toddler, booster seat or safety harness). Children 8 to 16 must be in an approved restraint or safety belt system. Children 16 and older and adults are also required to buckle up.

Source:

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP),
VT Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
www.vthighwaysafety.com