

New Child Safety Seat Law

The new child safety seat law requires that children ride properly secured in a child safety seat or booster seat until they are at least 6 years old or weigh 60 pounds. This law goes into effect January 1, 2002.

As children progress through different stages of growth and development, their child restraint needs change.

Infants ride rear-facing in an infant or convertible seat as long as possible but until they are at least 1 year of age AND weigh 20 pounds.

For **toddlers and preschoolers** use a child restraint with a harness until the child outgrows it.

Next, the **preschool or school age child** moves to a belt-positioning booster to raise him or her up and improve the fit of the vehicle shoulder and lap belt.

Children prematurely riding in a seat belt can suffer life-threatening injuries, including injury to the spinal cord, the brain or the internal organs of the abdomen. Most children need to use a belt-positioning booster seat until they are at least 8 years old, depending on the child's height and how the vehicle lap and shoulder belts fit. Safety belts don't fit children until they can sit with their back straight against the vehicle seat back cushion and their knees bent over the seat edge for the entire trip. The lap belt should fit low and snug across the child's lap, touching the upper thighs and the shoulder belt should cross the shoulder, not the throat or face, and be close to the child's chest.

Find out more about the child safety seat law by contacting Safely on the Move in Child Care toll-free at (866) 700-7686 or locally at (619) 594-4373.

Sources: "The Danger of Premature Graduation to Seat Belts for Young Children," by FK Winston, DR Durbin, MJ Kallan, EK Moll. *Pediatrics* 105(6):1179-1183, June, 2000.