

MARYLAND KIDS IN SAFETY SEATS (K.I.S.S.)

About KISS

Since the 1980s, Maryland Kids in Safety Seats (KISS) has been the state's lead agency in child passenger safety. KISS is housed in the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and funded by the Department of Transportation. Our mission is to help reduce the number of needless injuries and deaths by educating the public on child passenger safety. The goal of KISS is to help people use safety seats correctly each time a child rides in a car. KISS works to achieve these goals by:

- Educating the public on the state's child passenger safety law
- Offering literature and program materials for Maryland residents
- Providing training and technical assistance in child passenger safety throughout the state

NewsNotes

KISS produces a newsletter called **NewsNotes**, which discusses issues and challenges within child passenger safety. The newsletter includes new product information, safety seat recalls, as well as program updates. It also keeps readers abreast of the many nuances within the field. Contact us, if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

KISS Rents Safety Seats, Too!

KISS coordinates loaner sites throughout the state which offer seats at a low cost to families who otherwise can't afford them. Call KISS to locate a program in your area: 1-800-370-SEAT or (410) 767-6016.

KISS Helpline (1-800-370-SEAT)

KISS provides a helpline to the public. Contact KISS to find out:

- types of safety seats available
- how to properly install safety seats
- about safety seats and air bags
- seatbelt safety tips
- safety seat recalls
- how to schedule a training, presentation, or seat check

KISS email: kiss@dhmh.state.md.us

KISS online: www.mdkiss.org

IMPORTANT NOTE! As of October 1, 2003, Maryland's Child Passenger Safety Law requires all children who are **younger than 6 years old, regardless of weight**, or who weigh **40 pounds or less, regardless of age**, to be secured in a federally approved child safety seat according to the safety seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions.

Selecting the Appropriate Seat for Your Child

INFANTS

Place your baby in the back seat, rear-facing until they are one year and weigh at least twenty pounds. Choose an infant carrier used with or without a base or a convertible seat, preferably with a five-point harness. When the child nears one year or 20lbs., look for convertible seats with an upper weight limit of 30 pounds rear facing. Never put your baby in the front seat if your vehicle has a passenger-side air bag.

TODDLERS

Use a fully upright, forward-facing child seat after the child reaches 1 year old and weighs between 20 and 40 pounds. Read the instructions to learn how to install the safety seat and adjust the harness around the child.

PRE-SCHOOLERS

It is "best practice" for a child to remain in a safety seat with a harness system until 40 pounds. After 40 pounds, it is time for a booster seat to raise the child so that the vehicle lap and shoulder belt fit correctly. Use a booster seat until your child weighs 60 to 80 pounds, can bend his or her legs over the seat and is about four feet, six inches tall.

SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN

Many school age children should remain in booster seats (see pre-schoolers). For proper restraint make sure the lap belt fits low over the top of the thighs and the shoulder belt is across the chest. Never place the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. The safest position for a child is in the back seat.

Is Your Child Big Enough To Use A Safety Belt?

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A Five-Step Test

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
3. Is the lap belt on the tops of the thighs?
4. Is the shoulder belt centered on the and chest?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

If you answered "no" to any of these, your child needs a booster seat to ride safely in the car.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q.: Which safety seat is the best?

A: The best safety seat is one that you can afford, that fits your child and your car, and that you can use correctly each time. There are several different brands of child safety seats. Maryland KISS does not endorse a particular brand. All safety seats are certified by their manufacturers to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 213. Since compatibility between safety seats and vehicles varies, it is a good idea to try and install the safety seat in your car before making a purchase. Remember to follow both the child safety seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions.

Q: When can I turn my infant around to the forward-facing position?

A: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants remain in the rear-facing seating position until reaching **at least one year and at least 20 pounds**. Many safety seats go up to 22 pounds in the rear-facing position. However, some infants reach 20 pounds well before the age of one year. In this case, you will need to look for a safety seat that has a higher weight limit for the rear-facing position. There are a few options for seats that can accommodate larger babies up to 30 or 35 pounds rear facing:

- Britax Roundabout
- Century Smart Move (manufactured after 3-31-97) , Bravo, Accel, Encore (manufactured after 5-1-00), Ovation (manufactured after 5-1-00)
- Cosco Touriva (manufactured after 1-99), Alpha Omega (manufactured after 9-1-99), Olympian (manufactured after 9-1-99), Touriva (Regal Ride) (manufactured after 9-1-99), Triad
- Evenflo Horizon, Secure Choice, Medallion (manufactured after 1-4-99), Secure Advantage, Town Country, Ultara (manufactured after 9-1-99)
- Safeline Sit-n-Stroll
- Fisher Price Safe Embrace

Q: Why should children sit in the back seat?

A: Airbags save lives when used properly; however, at least 43 children have been killed in crashes when air bags deployed in front of them.

Airbags deploy quickly and with great force. Most children under 13 can be at great risk in the front seat position, especially if they are not properly restrained. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that all children under 12 ride in the back seat.

A recent study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that children restrained in the back of the car had a 38% lower death rate than those in front of the vehicle.

Drivers, make sure that you and everyone who rides with you are properly restrained:

- Small children should ride in an approved restraint system appropriate for their weight, height, and age
- Wear both the lap and shoulder belt
- Be sure that the shoulder belt is worn correctly over the collarbone, not behind the back.
- The lap belt should be low and snug on the hips.

Q: When should I put my toddler into a booster seat? What's the best way to protect my preschooler?

A: Finding the best way to buckle up a toddler can be confusing. It is very important that parents recognize boosters as the best option for children over 40 pounds. However, do not push your child out of a convertible or toddler seat too soon. A child should remain in a child safety seat with a harness as long as he/she fits, which means until:

- the child has exceeded the weight limit of the seat, usually 40 pounds
- he/she has grown too tall for the seat (ears are above the back of the car seat)
- the shoulders are above the highest strap slots

If any of these apply, the next step is to move to a booster. Most 40 pound children are not tall enough for a combination lap and shoulder belt to fit properly (across the shoulder and low on the hips). In addition, many children do not sit still enough to keep the lap belt positioned low on the hips. Belts that ride up on the abdomen can cause serious injury in the event of a crash. Booster seats are designed to improve the fit of safety belts. Most children will get better protection by using a booster seat with a lap-shoulder belt than a lap-shoulder belt alone. Most children should remain in a booster seat until they can properly fit into the vehicle restraint correctly, which means until:

- the child is approximately 80 pounds and 4 ½ feet tall
- the child can sit up straight with his/her legs bent over the edge of the seat
- the lap belt fits low and tight across the top of the thighs, not up on the belly
- the shoulder belt is across the shoulder and chest