



# Child Car Seat Safety Information

## Frequently Asked Questions



Information provided by our partners at the  
**California Highway Patrol** (Click on the CHP logo to left for more  
information)

### Why was the law revised?

Children are at greater risk when riding in the front seat. A child's injury risk is reduced by 33% when moved from the front seat to the back seat.

### Are there exemptions?

Yes, there are a few. Your child may ride in the front seat if:

- Your vehicle has no rear seats.
- Rear seats are side-facing jump seats.  
Child safety restraints must never be placed on side-facing vehicle seats.
- The child restraint system cannot be properly installed in the rear seat.  
For example, your vehicle has lap belts only in the back seat, but there are lap and shoulder belts in the front seat. Your child is 5 and weighs 45 pounds and must ride in a booster seat. The booster seat must be used with a lap and shoulder belt; therefore your child may ride in the front seat.
- Children under age 12 occupy all rear seats.
- Medical reason (written by the pediatrician) requires that child not be restrained in the back seat. All children are safer in the back seat, ask another adult to ride with the child in the back.

**I have a car that has three lap belts in the back seat. The front seat has lap and shoulder belts. I have three children. The oldest is 5, weighs 45 pounds and rides in a booster seat; the second is 2, weighs 30 pounds and rides in a forward facing car seat with a 5-point harness; the third is 2 weeks old, weighs 9 pounds and rides in a rear-facing infant seat. How do I safely secure them?**

The 5-year-old rides in a booster seat, which must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. The booster cannot be properly installed in the back seat with a lap belt. Therefore, by law, he may ride in the front seat using the booster seat and the lap and shoulder belt. The 2-year-old can ride forward-facing in a child restraint in the back seat. The infant must also ride in the back seat, in a rear-facing child restraint.

**I have a pick-up truck with no back seat. There is a driver and passenger air bag. Sometimes I have to transport my 6-month old grandson. How can I do so safely?**

Your grandson must be restrained in a rear-facing restraint. A rear-facing infant must never be placed in front of an airbag. However, just pick-up trucks have an air bag on/off switch. If your truck has the switch, turn off the air bag and move the vehicle seat as far back as possible. If you cannot switch off the airbag, use a different vehicle when transporting your grandson.

**I have three children, one is 11 and weighs 80 pounds, the second is 4 and weighs 50 pounds and the third is 5 months old and weighs 15 pounds. My car has two lap and shoulder belts and one lap belt in the back seat. How should I secure them?**

According to California law, the 11-year-old can ride in the front seat. However, the back seat is the safest place for all children, so place them all in the back. The 11-year-old needs the lap and shoulder belt. The 4-year-old needs a booster seat used with a lap and shoulder belt. The 5-month-old needs to be in a rear facing restraint, which can be placed in the middle and secured with the lap belt.

### What if my car has side-impact air bags in the rear seat?

A side-impact air bag inflates only a few inches toward the passenger. In a crash, it can prevent serious head or chest injury. It should not harm a child properly buckled up in a car seat or seat belt. However, it might injure someone leaning against the door. If your car has side-impact air bags, make sure no one leans against the door and refer to your vehicle's owner's manual for recommendations that apply to your vehicle regarding children and side-impact air bags.

### I lost my car seat instructions. How do I replace them?

Call or write the manufacturer and ask for a new set of free instructions.

### Where can I get my child's car seat or other restraint inspected to make sure it's being used properly?

There are many nationally certified child passenger safety technicians throughout California. Check with your local CHP office or local health department to find a technician or "fitting station" near you. You can also log on to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's \(NHTSA\)](#) website to find a fitting station.

### Where can I report a safety-related defect in my car or my child's car seat?

Call the United States Department of Transportation's Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236 or visit the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's](#) website.

### How do I report unrestrained children?

You may report unrestrained children in a motor vehicle to the California Highway Patrol by calling 1-800-TELLCHP.