

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY WEEK (BOOSTER SEATS)
FEBRUARY 1, 2006

Q. A lot of parents still don't know that there is such a thing as a "booster seat", and are not aware that when their child has outgrown their child safety seat, they need to then ride in a booster seat rather than an adult safety belt. Why is a booster seat such an important step in protecting children?

- Children who have outgrown their child safety seats (at around age 4 and about 40 pounds) are still not ready to use adult safety belts.
- Adult safety belts do not fit small children properly and place children at greater risk of serious injury and death in a crash.
- Children age 4 to 7 who use booster seats are 59 percent less likely to be injured in a crash than children who are restrained only by safety belts.
(Source: Partners for Child Passenger Safety / Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)
- 33 States and DC require the use of a booster seat or "appropriate restraint" use as of 1.15.06. (See chart.)

Q. When should parents use booster seats?

- Children who've outgrown their child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats, until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall.
- It is estimated that only 10-20 percent of kids ages 4-8 who should be using booster seats to protect them are actually in them.
- Children who have outgrown their child safety seat but are under 4'9" tall, need to ride in a booster seat.

Q. Why don't most parents place their children in booster seats?

- Lack of education and awareness about child safety seats and the consequences of using the wrong restraint device.
- Insufficient provisions in state child restraint laws.
- Parents incorrectly assume their children are ready to use adult safety belts.

Q. There's a bigger picture to the problem. We've heard for years that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children. Still true?

- Great strides have been made in getting parents to use the right child restraints for infants and toddlers, but not for older kids.
- Nevertheless, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading killer of children ages 3 to 14 (and also for all passengers up to age 33).
- At least 4 out of 5 children who should ride in booster seats currently do not.
- Many injuries and fatalities to children can be prevented with increased booster seat usage.

Q. What do you want parents to remember during this year's recognition of Child Passenger Safety Week?

- If they are under 4'9", they need a booster seat. Many kids don't reach 4'9" until age 10 or 11, making it all the more important that parents pay attention to the way the belts actually fit their children, and continue to use the booster seat, rather than "graduating" them to adult safety belts prematurely.
- Never allow a child to ride unrestrained period.

- Regardless of what your State law may be, make booster seats the rule in your family until the adult safety belts fit correctly.
- Kids under 13 are always safer riding in the back seat.
- For more information, go to www.boosterseat.gov.
- For maximum child passenger safety, parents and caregivers should follow the **4 Steps for Kids**:

1. Use rear-facing infant seats in the back seat from birth to at least one year of age and at least 20 pounds;
2. Use forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age one and 20 pounds to about age four and 40 pounds;
3. Use booster seats in the back seat from about age four to at least age eight—unless the child is 4' 9" or taller; and
4. Use safety belts in the back seat at age eight or older or taller than 4' 9".

Q. Where can a parent or caregiver purchase a booster seat?

- Booster seats can be purchased at many large toy and other retail stores.

Q. What can a parent or caregiver do to ensure that their child safety seat is installed correctly?

- Go to www.nhtsa.dot.gov and click on "Child Seat Inspections" to find an inspection site near you. Or call 1-866-SEAT-CHECK or visit www.seatcheck.org.