

# Injury Alert: Child Car Seats

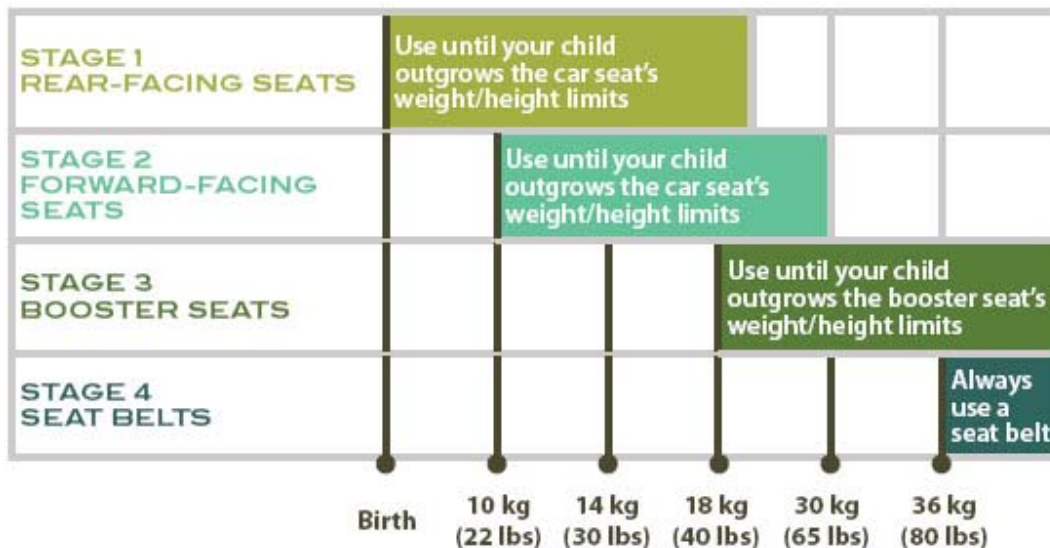
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**December 22, 2011** – IMPACT, the WRHA Injury Prevention Program has been asked to clarify a number of issues regarding child car seats and booster seats.

## When is an infant/ toddler/ child ready for the next stage of car seat?

It is safest to keep a child in each stage as long as possible to the upper weight and height limit of the car seat. Since rear-facing is the safest option, all infants should stay rear-facing until age 2 unless a seat is not available to accommodate their weight/length. Parents should be encouraged to purchase car seats with the highest possible weight limits for each stage.

Transport Canada developed the chart below to show the range of car seat weight limits. Note that booster seats should be used until a height of 4 feet 9 inches, regardless of weight.



## What about winter clothing and infant car seats?

Transport Canada notes that bulky snowsuits and those made with slippery material can affect the harness. When using bulky winter clothing compress the material to ensure that the straps fit snugly, and make sure that the chest clip is at armpit level. Parents should dress children in weather-appropriate outerwear that fits well and is not too bulky, ensuring that the harness can be correctly fastened.

## What about lower cost options?

A good buy may be a convertible car seat that can be used rear-facing for infants and then turned to forward facing. These seats typically have higher weight limits for the rear facing position than infant-only seats, and prices start at \$80. Some seats can be used for forward facing (stage 2) and then as a belt positioning booster (stage 3). Prices for these seats start at \$99. No back booster seats start at \$18. Families should be aware that car seats purchased in the US do not meet Canadian safety requirements.

### What about second hand car seats?

A second hand car seat can be used if the seat has a Canada safety mark, is not past the expiry date, has all the parts and instructions, has no cracks in the plastic shell and has never been in a crash.

### How do I know if a child should be in a booster seat or a seat belt?

<b>A child should use a Booster Seat if:</b>	<b>A child is ready for a Seat Belt when:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ he/she is between 4-8 years of age</li><li>✓ weighs at least 40lb (18 kg)</li><li>✓ is less than 4ft 9 in (145cm) tall</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ he/she is 9 years of age or older</li><li>✓ weighs at least 80lb (36kg)</li><li>✓ is at least 4ft 9in (145cm) tall</li><li>✓ the seat belt fits properly (see seat belt fit test below); otherwise use a booster seat</li></ul>
<b>When using a Booster Seat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Use both the lap <u>and</u> shoulder belt with the seat</li><li>- Follow the manufacturer's instructions</li></ul>	
<b><i>Children less than 13 years of age should always ride in the back seat.</i></b>	

### The seat belt fit test:

Place the child in the back seat, against the seat back.

- The child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat.
- The lap belt rests on top of the thighs, not the stomach.
- The shoulder belt centres on the collarbone and middle of the chest, and not the neck or chin. Never place the shoulder belt behind the back or under the arm—this can cause life-threatening injuries.
- The child can stay in this position for the entire trip.

**If any of these criteria aren't met, use a booster seat.**

If you have questions, contact IMPACT at 787-1873. or email [injuryinfo@wrha.mb.ca](mailto:injuryinfo@wrha.mb.ca)

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