

# ***National Child Passenger Safety Week: Protecting Our Youngest Passengers***

Keeping children safe while traveling is a top concern for parents and caregivers. With so many car seat options and ever-changing recommendations, it can be overwhelming to know what's best. That's why **National Child Passenger Safety Week, September 21–27, 2025**, is the perfect time to revisit how we protect children on the road.

## **Why Car Seats Matter**

The numbers tell a powerful story:

- Car seats reduce the risk of fatal injury by 71% for infants (under 1 year) and 54% for toddlers (ages 1–4) in passenger cars, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- In light trucks, the reduction is 58% for infants and 59% for toddlers.

These lifesaving benefits only work when car seats are used and installed correctly. Unfortunately, car seats can be complicated, and misuse is common. Reading both the car seat manual and your vehicle manual is essential for correct installation and use.

## **The Reality on the Roads**

In 2023:

- 700 children were killed in traffic crashes while riding in passenger vehicles.
- Over 125,000 children were injured.
- Children ages 8–12 years old accounted for the highest number of fatalities (314).

This older age group is often found using the wrong type of restraint, too often moving to the seat belt before they're ready.

Here's a quick guide to proper child restraint use:

### **Rear-Facing Infant or Convertible Seat**

- Keep children rear-facing until at least age 2 or until they reach the seat's maximum height/weight.
- Never place a rear-facing seat in front of an active airbag.

### **Forward-Facing Seat**

- Transition to forward-facing only after outgrowing the rear-facing seat.
- Stay forward-facing as long as possible, up to the manufacturer's limits.

### **Belt-Positioning Booster Seat**

- Use a booster until the vehicle seat belt fits properly, usually when the child is 4'9" tall and between 8–12 years old.
- Use High-back boosters if the vehicle has low seat backs or no head restraints.

## **Seat Belt**

- A child should be at least 8 years old or 4'9" tall before moving to just the seat belt.
- The lap belt should sit snugly across the hips/upper thighs, not the stomach. The shoulder belt should lie across the chest and mid-shoulder, not the neck or arm.

## **Installation Matters**

- Every car seat must be installed using either the lower anchors OR the seat belt.
- If using a seat belt, check your vehicle manual for how to "lock" it properly.
- For forward-facing seats, always wear the top tether if available.

## **Take Action During Child Passenger Safety Week**

Keeping kids safe in the car starts with the right seat, correct installation, and proper use every ride, every time. National Child Passenger Safety Week is a reminder to:

- Double-check your child's car seat.
- Review the latest safety recommendations.
- Take advantage of resources like free car seat checks.

Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians are available across Pennsylvania to help parents and caregivers ensure their car seats are installed correctly. To find a technician near you, visit the [Pennsylvania Traffic Injury Prevention Project](#).