National Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week
February 11 – 17, 2007

Although some children in elementary school no longer ride in a car seat or booster seat, parents should be aware of the daily risks our children face when riding in a motor vehicle.

Child Passenger Risks Observed at Maryland Elementary Schools:

- Children riding in the front seat (usually in vehicles with active airbags)
- Unbelted children
- Belted children wearing backpacks (preventing proper restraint)
- Children wearing shoulder belts under the arm or behind the back

Did you know?

- When ranked by ages, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for each age 4 – 14? (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)
- Most crashes involving children occur in local communities during routine trips
- More than half (52%) occur on parking lots or roads with posted speed limits of less than 45 mph
- 59% of crashes occur 10 minutes or less from home; 80% occur 20 minutes or less
- Children under 13 years old who ride in the front seat have a 40% greater risk of injury than children riding in the back seat. (PCPS Fact & Trend Report, 10/06)

Maryland’s Law

Maryland’s Child Passenger Safety Law requires that all children up to the age of 16 must be restrained by a seat belt, child safety seat, or booster seat in all seating positions of the car. Also, children younger than 6 years old and weighing less than 40 pounds must use a child safety seat or booster seat.

But is that enough?

- Studies have shown that most children do not fit the car’s seat belt until they reach a height of about 4’9”, usually around age 8, so they should use a belt-positioning booster seat. A booster seat helps the seat belt fit securely across the chest and low across the upper thighs — to help prevent severe injuries, and death in the event of a crash.

- While research clearly shows that using a booster seat reduces a child’s risk of injury in a crash by 59% vs. wearing a seat belt alone, only 54% of 4 – 8 year olds ride in car seats or belt-positioning booster seats (PCPS Fact & Trend Report, 10/06).

To find out when your child is ready to ride safely in the car’s lap/shoulder belt, s/he should pass the “5-Step Test” (Safety Belt Safe USA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 5-Step Test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do the child’s knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the upper thighs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?</td>
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If you answered “no” to any of these questions, your child needs a booster seat to ride safely in the car. Kids like boosters because they are more comfortable.

Key Safety Tips:

- Buckle your child on every ride.
- All children should sit in the back seat.
- Use the correct safety restraint for your child’s size.
- Use child safety seats and seat belts correctly.
- Be a good role model and buckle up!

Remember, safety is not negotiable!

Additional Resources:

- Maryland Kids In Safety Seats (KISS) [www.mdkiss.org](http://www.mdkiss.org)
- Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS) [www.chop.edu/carseat](http://www.chop.edu/carseat)
- Safety Belt Safe USA [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)