



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)

The 5-Step Test

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat?
3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the upper thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?

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

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
- Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS) www.chop.edu/carseat
- Safety Belt Safe USA www.carseat.org
- Booster Club Activity Guide www.boosterseat.gov