

## **Traffic Safety FAQ's**

1. What is the New York State car seat law?

New York State law requires all children under the age of 4 be properly restrained in car seats or appropriate child restraint systems that meets all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. For more information please refer to the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee's website [www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com).

2. What is the New York State booster seat law?

New York State law requires all children between the ages of 4 – 7, who are 4'9" or less, be properly restrained in booster seats or appropriate child restraints that meet applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. Booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. School buses are exempt from the booster seat law. For more information please refer to the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee's website [www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com).

3. What is the Vermont booster seat law?

Vermont State law requires that "a child weighing more than 20 pounds, and who is one year of age or older and under the age of eight years, shall be restrained in a child passenger restraining system". For more information, please refer to the Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program [www.vthighwaysafety.com](http://www.vthighwaysafety.com).

4. How do I attach to my child's car seat the fuzzy head-support product that I was given at my baby shower?

You don't. It is not recommended to attach anything to a car seat that did not come with the seat from the manufacturer. These are called "after-market products". Attaching after-market products could be unsafe because they were not crash tested with the car seat. They may interfere with how the car seat protects your child during a crash.

5. How do I stop my infant's head from falling to one side when using the car seat?

If the car seat manufacturer provided a head-support system with the car seat then you can use that. When such a system is not included with the seat, it is recommended to place receiving blankets on both sides of the infant's head in between the head and the sides of the car seat. Be sure not to place the blankets under the infant's head or body, or around the harness straps. Since the blanket is not being attached to the seat, this method will cradle and stabilize the child's head and neck without interfering with car seat's crash safety. Using this method, you can also customize the blanket's size and support to meet the needs of your individual infant.

6. What is the best car seat to use for my child?

All new car seats and child restraint systems sold in the United States must meet the same Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The best seat for you to use with your child is:

- A seat that you can use correctly each time you put your child into it.
- A seat that fits your child. Make sure your child is within the seat's recommended age, height and weight limits.
- A seat that fits your vehicle, sometimes there are incompatibility issues between seats and vehicles so it is a good idea to make sure the seat can fit in your vehicle securely prior to purchasing it.

7. Is it safe to use a car seat that has been in a moderate to severe car crash?

No. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that is not safe to use a car seat if it has been involved in a moderate to severe crash. Please refer to NHTSA's website [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) to determine the severity of the crash, and if your seat should be replaced. Even if your child was not in the car seat when it was involved in the crash, you should still replace the seat. Some auto insurance companies will reimburse you for a car seat that was involved in a crash. You must contact your auto insurance company for further reimbursement information.

8. Is it safe to use a car seat that I bought at a garage sale from someone whom I don't know?

No. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that is not safe to use a car seat if it has been in a moderate to severe crash [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). Since it is not always possible to determine if a car seat has been in a crash just by looking at it, you should not use a car seat if you do not know its history. Please refer to question number 7.

9. Does Clinton County Traffic Safety rent car seats?

No. It would be unsafe for Clinton County Traffic Safety to loan out a car seat that has already been used. This is because it may be impossible to determine if the seat had been involved in a moderate to severe crash. Please refer to question number 7.

10. Is it safe to use a seat that is missing its labels?

No. Car seats should have labels that list the following:

1. **The manufacture date.** This is because the Juvenile Manufacturer's Product Association [www.jpma.org](http://www.jpma.org) recommends not using a car seat after it is six years old. Many of the new car seats manufactured today have an expiration date molded into the plastic shell. You also need this date to check the car seat for recalls.
2. **The model number.** To check a seat for recalls you must have both the model number and the manufacture date. A recall list is available at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov). If your car seat has been recalled you must contact the manufacturer for further instructions.

3. **A label stating it meets US Federal Safety Standards (FMVSS).** All new car seats sold in the United States are required to have such labeling.

11. How do I install a car seat into my vehicle?

You must read *both* the car seat instruction manual *and* the vehicle instruction manual to determine safe car seat installation. If you would like to schedule an appointment to have your car seat checked by a nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technician please contact Clinton County Traffic Safety at 518-565-4824.

12. How can I have my car seat checked?

Clinton County Traffic Safety sponsors five fitting stations through out Clinton County. Nationally certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians and Instructors staff these stations. You must have an appointment to have your seat checked at a Clinton County Traffic Safety sponsored fitting station.

Clinton County Traffic Safety also sponsors four car seat check events per year. No appointment is necessary to have your seat checked at an event.

Please call Clinton County Traffic Safety at 518-565-4824 for appointment and seat check event information.

13. What is LATCH?

LATCH is an acronym for Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children. It is an alternate system for installing car seats into vehicles, instead of using the vehicle seatbelt system. LATCH anchors are not available on many vehicles made in the US prior to September 30, 2002. You must read both your vehicle owner's manual and your car seat instruction manual for proper LATCH use. For more information, please visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

14. Why does my infant have to face the rear of the vehicle?

Facing the rear of the vehicle is the safest position for young children. This is because of crash dynamics. Most crashes are frontal impact. This means that if you are involved in a car crash, you are most likely to hit or be hit by something in front of you. When this happens the head is thrown forward. In adults and older children this may result in temporary head and neck injuries like whiplash. However, infants and young children have more fragile necks and bodies than adults do, so if they are forward facing in a frontal impact crash their spinal cords can actually stretch and tear. By facing the rear of the vehicle, in a properly angled seat, the child's head and neck are cradled and protected by the car seat. To view a video of these crash forces please visit the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia [www.chop.edu/consumer/jsp/division/generic.jsp?id=77971](http://www.chop.edu/consumer/jsp/division/generic.jsp?id=77971).

15. When can I turn my child around to face the front of the vehicle?

A child must be at least one year old *and* 20 pounds before riding forward facing in a vehicle. The child must meet both the age and weight requirements. This means that a sixteen-month-old child weighing 18 pounds should still ride rear facing. The American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), recommends that children remain rear facing until the upper limits of the car seat. Many convertible car seats manufactured today can be

used rear facing until 30 or 35 pounds. You must check your individual car seat for this information.

16. Can I put a car seat in my pickup truck?

It depends upon the truck. If the truck has only a single cab and an active airbag with no on/off switch than you cannot put a rear facing seat in it. If the truck has a single cab and is equipped with an on/off switch for the air bag, than you can put a rear facing seat in the front of the vehicle if you turn off the air bag.

For trucks with extended cabs, you can put a car seat in the rear cab as long as over 80% of the bottom of the car seat is on the vehicle seat. If less than 80% of the car seat is on the vehicle seat the car seat will not be stable, and you should find a safer alternative for transporting your child. If you can fit the car seat properly in the rear cab, that is safer than the front seat.

It is not recommended to put a car seat in the “Jump Seats”, if your pick up truck has them.

17. Which car seat can I get that will keep my child from unbuckling herself?

Unfortunately, there is no “escape-proof” car seat. Different seats do have different buckles, but a child who unbuckles himself from one type will usually learn quickly how to unbuckle another. Though it may seem helpful at the time, *do not cover* the car seat buckle with anything that will prohibit unbuckling. Adding anything to a car seat that did not come with it could interfere with how the seat protects your child during a crash, please refer to question number 4.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A, [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org), suggests that “parental firmness” is an excellent way to teach children that it is not safe to unbuckle themselves. Many parents have had success with pulling over to the side of the road every time the child unbuckles herself, and not moving the vehicle until the child is buckled up. If you try this, you may want to plan extra time for the trip and bring a book.

You should also set a good example for you children by always buckling up your self and all other adults in the vehicle.

18. What is the New York State bicycle helmet law?

As of January 1, 2005 all people in New York State under the age of 14 years old must wear an approved bicycle helmet when riding a bicycle, skate board, in-line skates, or gliding. It is recommended that everyone, adults included, wear a helmet at all times. For more information about New York State bicycle laws please visit the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee at [www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com).

19. Can my infant wear a bicycle helmet?

National Safe Kids, [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org), recommends that children should not wear a bicycle helmet until at least one year of age.

20. What is the New York State seatbelt law?

In New York State, all front seat passengers must wear a seatbelt and all children under the age of 16 years old must wear a seatbelt when in the back seat of a vehicle. Of course, it is safest for all passengers to be properly buckled at all times. For more information about New York State seatbelt laws please visit the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee at [www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com).

21. At what age is it all right to ride in the front seat of a vehicle?

It is recommended that all children 12 year old and younger ride in the back seat of vehicles. For more information please visit SafetBeltSafe U.S.A. [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org).