

# Car seat safety

## Information for parents in the Neonatal Nurseries

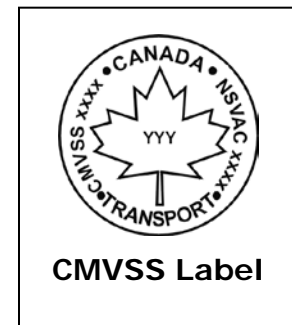
All babies must be secured in a safe car seat every time they ride in a vehicle. Preterm babies and babies with breathing problems will be tested in their car seat before going home.

### Choosing a safe car seat

To decide which car seat is right for your baby: read the owner's manual for your vehicle and the car seat manufacturer's instructions, and look over the car seat carefully.

#### What to check for:

- The car seat must have a Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) label.
- The car seat is rear-facing. **Your baby needs a rear-facing car seat until he or she is at least 1 year old and 22 pounds (10kg).** If your baby is small, look for a smaller model of car seat.
- The car seat can be used with your vehicle.
- The expiry date (on the manufacturer's label) will not pass during the entire time you will use the car seat. **Never use a car seat after the expiry date has passed.**
- The car seat has all its parts. Nothing is cracked, ripped or broken. Never use a car seat that has been in a car crash, even a minor one.
- The car seat has not been recalled. Call the manufacturer (the phone number is on the car seat) or check Transport Canada's public notices for recalls (1-800-333-0371 or [www.tc.gc.ca](http://www.tc.gc.ca)).



If you buy a new car seat, fill out and mail the registration card that comes with it. If the car seat is recalled, the company can contact you.

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## Installing the car seat correctly

- Carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions and the owner's manual for your vehicle. If you don't have the car seat's instructions, call the manufacturer for a copy (the phone number will be on the car seat) or check their website.
- Install the car seat in the middle of the back seat. This is the safest place for all children under 13 years of age. Your child should never sit in front of an airbag.
- You can have your car seat checked to make sure it is installed correctly in your vehicle. Call your local public health unit and ask about car seat clinics in your area. In Hamilton, call Health Connections at 905-546-3550.

## Securing your baby in the car seat

**All rear-facing car seats are different.  
Follow the instructions that come with your car seat.**

- Dress your baby in clothes that allow the harness strap to fit between the legs. Do not wrap your baby in a blanket or use a bunting bag.
  - Put the carry handle of the car seat in the locked down position for traveling.
  - Put your baby in the car seat. Make sure your baby's back and bottom are up against the seat.
  - Put the harness over your baby's shoulders. The harness should be snug. Just one finger should fit between the harness and your baby's collarbone. The harness straps should attach to the seat near the level of your baby's shoulders.
  - Check that the chest clip is at your baby's armpit level.
  - If your baby needs extra side support, use an insert that comes with the car seat (it should not be an "add on"). If you don't have an insert, place a small roll on each side of your baby.
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- If your baby needs support to prevent slouching, place a small roll in front of the strap between your baby's legs.
- Secure the car seat tightly in the vehicle (some car seats snap into a base that is secured to the vehicle). Follow the instructions for the car seat and for your vehicle. Tighten the lap and shoulder belts as much as possible.
- After your baby is buckled into the car seat and it is secured in the vehicle, you can put a blanket over your baby if needed. You don't want your baby to get too hot.
- If your baby needs a portable oxygen tank or other equipment, anchor the equipment to the floor of the vehicle or under the seat.

## Traveling with your baby

- Never leave your baby alone in a vehicle.
- If possible, have an adult sit in the back seat to watch your baby.
- Use the car seat for travel only. After the car ride, take your baby out of the car seat, even if he or she is sleeping.
- Limit the time your baby spends in the car seat. During long trips, take a break every couple of hours and take your baby out of the car seat.

### Car seat testing

If your baby was preterm or has breathing problems, he or she will need a car seat test before going home.

This is a test to see if your baby:

- has any breathing problems while in his or her car seat, or
- needs special positioning to travel safely in the car seat.

The test will be done in your baby's car seat. You will need to assemble your car seat and bring it to the hospital, including the base if it has one.

Your nurse will give you more information about "Car seat testing".

## For more information

- Call your local Public Health Unit – ask about Car Seat Clinics in your area. If you live in Hamilton, call Health Connections at 905-546-3550.
- Call Service Ontario at 1-800-268-4686 or visit the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's website:  
[www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/carseat/choose.shtml](http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/carseat/choose.shtml)
- Transport Canada – call 1-800-333-0371 or visit:  
[www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/safedrivers-childsafety-car-index-873.htm](http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/safedrivers-childsafety-car-index-873.htm)
- Parachute Canada – visit: [www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/topic/C2](http://www.parachutecanada.org/injury-topics/topic/C2)

Free internet access is available at your local public library.