

Car seat testing

A test for preterm babies, newborns and young children who have a greater chance of breathing problems in a car seat.

What is car seat testing?

This is a test to see if your baby or child:

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

What do I need to do before the test?

The test will be done in your child's car seat. You will need to assemble the car seat and bring it to the hospital, including the base if it has one. If you don't have a car seat, we will give you information about choosing a safe car seat.

The nurse will check that the car seat meets Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS).

CMVSS Label



It is against the law to use a car seat that does not meet these standards.

Checklist for a safe car seat

- It has a CMVSS label.
- It is suitable for your baby's weight and age, or your child's weight and height.
- The expiry date has not passed.
- There are no cracks, chips, rips or broken parts.

It is best to feed your child at least 20 minutes before the test.

What happens during the test?

- Place the car seat and base on your child's crib mattress (with the side rails up) or on a firm, safe area. Position the car seat as recommended for traveling.
- Put your child in the car seat and secure the harness straps. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions that came with the car seat. You may cover your child with a blanket after the straps are secured. Do not use any products that did not come with the car seat (such as 'head huggers').
- The nurse will put a sensor on your child's foot or hand. The sensor will measure the oxygen level in your child's blood during the test.
- The test will take at least 90 minutes. The nurse will regularly check on your child during the test. You are welcome to stay with your child.
- If your child gets fussy, you can offer a soother (pacifier), but do not move or alter the car seat or its harness.

What if the oxygen level drops?

The nurse will closely watch your child and the oxygen level. If the oxygen level drops, the nurse will stop the test to adjust your child's position. Placing rolls on each side of your child may help. When your child is ready, the test will be started again.

If the test is stopped again, the nurse may try changing the position of the car seat. If there are still problems, the nurse will tell your child's doctor and reschedule the test for another time. This may delay your child's discharge from the hospital.

What happens after the test?

When the test is over, take your child out of the car seat. The nurse will tell you the results of the test. The doctor will see the test results in your child's medical record. Passing the test means your baby is ready for the car ride home.

If your child needs special positioning, the nurse or Occupational Therapist will show you how to do this. When you go home, the car seat must be installed properly in the back seat, according to the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, have an adult sit beside your child.