

Child Passenger Safety Tips:

- Always read the child seat instructions and the car owner's manual before using a child safety seat.
- Do not use a pre-owned child seat that you do not have printed instructions for.
- There are millions of vehicles on the road with lap only seat belts in the rear seat. We now know that lap belt only restraint systems can cause severe abdominal and spinal cord injuries in crashes and even near-crashes.
- Do not allow a child to ride in the back seat with only a lap belt. You can take your vehicle to an auto dealer and have it retrofitted with shoulder strap belts.



A Note About Booster Seats

Booster seats are very important, and unfortunately – underused. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) relays this information:

- Approximately 60% of children between the ages of four and seven who should be riding in a booster seat are not placed in one. Also, an estimated 46% of car seats and booster seats are misused in a way that could reduce effectiveness.
- Many parents are unfamiliar with the risks of not using a booster seat, or unaware of the benefits of using one.
- Booster seats raise a child up so that safety belts fit properly. The NHTSA provides a downloadable, printable booster seat guide on their website, www.nhtsa.gov.

Consumer Safety – Videos and Literature

The personal injury law firm of Murray Guari Trial Attorneys PL is committed to the safety and awareness of South Florida parents, caregivers, and their families. In addition to providing child passenger safety information for parents via our outreach program with local schools, we also provide informative, helpful videos that can be viewed by going to the home page of our website - www.murrayguari.com.

If you would like more copies of this brochure, you can download from our website, or you may request them from our office by calling **561-366-9099**.



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CHILD SEAT SAFETY

A guide to proper use of child safety seats



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How Important is a Child Seat?

Every day in Florida, approximately 1,000 auto accidents occur. According to the state of Florida crash records database, 401,867 auto crashes occurred in 2019. Over 1,053 children 14 years and under died in car crashes and an estimated 183,000 children were injured in these crashes. To protect your child, the proper use of child seats – and later – booster seats and seatbelts – is critical. It is also required by Florida Statute.

First Things First

Expecting parents should research and choose a child safety seat – and practice installing and using it – before the baby arrives because the proper use of this seat is so important. You do not want to wait until the busy first days of your child's life. It is also important to note that airbags were designed to save adults but can do great harm to children. This is why the back seat is used until children are old enough and large enough to tolerate the release of an airbag should an accident occur. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the NHTSA recommend that children be at least 13 years old before riding in the front passenger seat.

Infant Seat vs. Convertible Seat

Both types of seats are safe for your child, and safe for a newborn to ride in. The difference in these seats is that the infant seat is smaller, and your newborn will fit more snugly in the seat. But once the baby grows, you'll need to purchase another seat. The convertible seat will work for newborns through approximately 40 pounds.

Guidelines for Child Safety Belts & Restraints

It is estimated that 7 out of 10 parents improperly install their child seats. You can have your seat evaluated and receive instructions for proper use by contacting one of several organizations that offers this service. This includes the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and Palm Beach County Fire Rescue. Call to find out when and where they are performing the evaluations. You can also visit www.usa.safekids.org to find locations.

Here are some child seat and restraint requirements in Florida –

- Florida law requires the use of seat belts or child restraint devices by drivers of motor vehicles, all front seat passengers and all children riding in a vehicle under 18.
- Children should be in the rear seats until at least age 12.
- Florida law requires children aged 5 and under to be secured properly in a crash-tested, federally approved child restraint device.
- Children ages 0 through 3 must be in child restraint devices of a separate carrier or a vehicle manufacturer's integrated child seat.
- Children aged 4 through 5 must be in a separate carrier, integrated child seat or booster seat.

Choosing a Seat

There are dozens of brands and no one brand that is “best” or “safest” – but you can use the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's **Car Seat Finder** tool that lets you compare seats and use their **ease-of-use ratings** to find the right car seat for your child by visiting www.nhtsa.gov.

You should also do your own research by speaking to friends and coworkers about child seats they've used and going online to see if there are any recalls on the brand or model you have purchased or are considering. You can also find out if a child seat has been recalled by calling the Auto Safety Hotline at 888-327-4236.

Here are a few things to look for when selecting a child seat:

- A car seat that meets all current federal motor vehicle standards.
- A car seat that is easy to use and has clear, understandable instructions.
- A car seat based on your child's age and size
- A seat that fits your vehicle whose attachments are compatible with your car's backseat.
- Do not use a “pre-owned” car seat that you do not have instructions for, or one that doesn't have the model number and manufacturer noted. If a seat has any visible cracks, discontinue use immediately.
- Finally, set a good example for children and teens by ALWAYS using your seatbelt and do not talk or text on the phone while driving. Demonstrate these safety practices so that your children will practice safe habits, too.