



Article Series

Information to Know from Martinson & Beason, P.C., Attorneys at Law

Child Safety | 2011 Car Seat Recommendations

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP.org) released new recommendations in 2011 to keep children safe in the event of a car accident. Auto accidents are the leading cause of death for those under the age of 21. Research has proven that children who are properly restrained in an approved car seat are less likely to be seriously injured or die in a car crash.

The New Standard

The AAP's recommendations are as follows:

- All children under age 2 should be secured in a rear-facing seat.
- Children under age 13 should ride in approved booster seats in the back seat of the vehicle. Children who have reached 4'9" in height are generally tall enough to use adult seat belts.
- Car seats and booster seats are all labeled with height and weight recommendations. Make certain to use the appropriate seat for your child's size and weight.
- The center position in the back seat is safest.
- Make certain the seat is installed properly. [Most police departments will gladly show you the proper way to install the seat.]

Getting the Right Fit

There are dozens of car seat models on the market, from basic models to fancy convertible seats. These may range in price from under \$50 to several hundred dollars. It is important that your child be placed in a restraint that "fits" his or her body to ensure the highest level of protection. This begins the moment you leave the hospital with your newborn. You may need to purchase more than one seat as your child grows.

Types of Car Seats

There are three types of seats for use by **infants**, including infant-only seats, convertible seats, and 3-in-1 seats. All are used facing the rear. When your child reaches age two and can be turned to face forward, you can continue to use the convertible and 3-in-1 seats until your child reaches the height and weight limits of the seat.

Free Car Seats for Low Income Families

The use of child safety seats is required in all 50 states in the U.S. These seats can be expensive.

Here are some options to check on the availability of a free car seat:

- If you are eligible for WIC, check with your local office to see if they have a safety seat program.
- Call the business number of your local police department or the state police and ask if they offer free seats or know where you can get one.
- Check with your medical insurance provider or with Medicare to see if they will reimburse for this expense.
- Ask at your place of worship or local United Way office.



Martinson & Beason, P.C., Attorneys at Law

115 North Side Square, Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Toll Free: 800-255-6534 • Local: 256-533-1667 • Fax: 256-533-1696

Email: info@martinsonandbeason.com • MartinsonAndBeason.com



Article Series

Information to Know from Martinson & Beason, P.C., Attorneys at Law

Very small infants may need additional neck and head support in the seat; while you can purchase a head support at the local baby superstore, rolled towels placed next to the child's head can generally be used just as effectively. A special note for parents of preemies: you may need an approved car bed instead of a car seat until your child has grown a bit.

For **toddlers and older children**, forward-facing only seats are available, as are built-in seats and travel vests that can be secured using tethers. Again, the important thing to remember is to match your child's height and weight to the safety product selected.

Installing the Car Seat or Booster

When you purchase a car seat or booster seat, you must look closely at the instructions regarding installation. Newer vehicles (built since 2002) have a built-in LATCH system to secure car seats. If your vehicle is older than that, or only has lap belts, you may not be able to properly secure certain car seat models. Proper installation of the seat is the key to ensuring your child receives the maximum protection value from the restraint.

More Information

The AAP website (www.aap.org) has detailed information about types of seats and answers many commonly asked questions. We would recommend you visit their site and review their [safety information for families](#) and the most recent [car seat safety product listings](#).

Post-Accident Note & Recalls

We do not recommend purchasing used car seats. If a car seat has been in an accident, it should be discarded and replaced as it may no longer provide the same safety value. If you are given a used car seat by a friend and know that it has not been in an accident, ask that person to provide the instructions or search the manufacturer's website for a copy and read them carefully. It is also important to register your product with the manufacturer so you will receive any recall notices. You may also sign up for recall notices via e-mail at the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website (www.cpsc.gov).

A Final Note

We at Martinson & Beason hope that you are never involved in an accident—especially with your child in the vehicle—but if you or your child are injured in an accident, we would be happy to speak with you for free to explain your rights. We hope that you have found this article useful. Please feel free to share this important safety information with your friends.



Martinson & Beason, P.C., Attorneys at Law

115 North Side Square, Huntsville, Alabama 35801

Toll Free: 800-255-6534 • Local: 256-533-1667 • Fax: 256-533-1696

Email: info@martinsonandbeason.com • MartinsonAndBeason.com