

## Car Seat Information For Newborns

### What is the best car seat?

This is the most common question from parents. There isn't a "best seat" for all children and all vehicles. The best or safest seat is one that:

- Fits your child's size and weight
- Fits in the vehicle tightly
- Will be used correctly on every ride

A big concern is getting a car seat that fits well in the vehicle that will be used. Seat belts seem like simple things, but using them to secure a car seat can be hard to do well. Many kinds of seat belt systems are in cars and trucks, but some types that work for grownups are less helpful for kids.

### What are lower anchors and tethers for children (LATCH)?

This system uses special fittings instead of seat belts to hold the car seat in place. When both the vehicle and car seat have LATCH parts, use them instead of the seat belt if they make the car seat fit tighter. In many vehicles, but not all, using LATCH will make it easier to get a tighter fit for the car seat.

### How do you put a car seat in a vehicle the right way?

- Always read and follow the directions in the car seat manual and the vehicle manual. **Anchor the seat tightly** with either the seat belt **OR** the LATCH. Do not use both. Check that the car seat fits your vehicle before your baby is born. To find a car seat check in Central MN, call (320) 656-7021 or go online at <https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/ots/child-passenger-safety/Pages/car-seat-checks.aspx>
- All car seats must be in **the back seat** of the car. Never put a baby or child in the front seat with an active airbag. The back is safer for everyone.
- The **rear-facing** position is the safest. Children should stay rear-facing **until the age of 2** or

until they reach the top height and weight listed on the car seat. Most convertible car seats can be used until 30-35 pounds. Check the height and weight limit on the car seat.

- Tilt the car seat back far enough so the baby's head does not flop forward. The car seat manual will list the correct angle to use.
- Dress your baby in clothes that allow the harness to fit between the legs. Do not swaddle in a blanket or use a bulky snowsuit
- For newborns, put the harness straps in the lowest slots. They need to be **at or below the baby's shoulders**.
- The crotch strap needs to give a snug fit and not be too far away from the baby. If the car seat has a moveable crotch strap, move it to the closest spot to the baby. If it cannot be moved, ask your nurse or talk to a child passenger safety technician for help.
- Make the harness snug. You should not be able to pinch slack in the straps with your fingertips. After the harness is buckled, you can cover the baby with a blanket.
- For small baby or a baby born early, you may need a car seat for babies who weight under 5 pounds. These babies may need a car seat test to see if they can handle sitting in a car seat. Ask your nurse for more information.
- Bring the car seat to the hospital the day before you expect to go home or even earlier if your baby is in NICU. It is important to **check the straps to see how well your baby fits in the car seat**, in case you need to get a different one.
- When you go home with your baby, it is your responsibility to place your baby in the car seat and to secure the car seat in your vehicle. Hospital staff will not place your baby in the car seat or place the seat in your vehicle.