



June E-Newsletter, 2010

Topic: Car Seat Safety

Dear Friends,

I am so excited that summer is upon us! Time to slow down our hectic lifestyles and enjoy the beautiful summer weather with a little getaway! In planning for your summer vacation, we want to make certain your baby travels safely along the way. This month, in celebrating "National Safety Month", we will be discussing a topic near and dear to my heart...car seat safety!

Enjoy!

Nurse Wendy

Car Seat Safety

It is currently estimated that nearly 90% of car seats are installed and used incorrectly. While this statistic may seem astounding when you think about the number of car seats in the market, as well as the many models of cars that are out on the road, it is mind blowing to think that even one car seat gets installed right! There are some common mistakes that families make, as well as simple ways to avoid them. This month we will explore some tips to ensure that your child travels as safely as possible.

In the state of California, the current law requires that children be placed in a rear facing car seat until at least 1 year old AND 20 pounds. Additionally, all children are required to be in a child restraint system until 6 years of age OR 60 pounds. While the law states *rear facing to one year and 20 pounds*, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommends that the child remains rear facing for as long as possible, as it is always safer when the car seat is rear facing. A simple way to determine the best time to forward face your child is to look at the instruction stickers on the side of your car seat. You will find that it says "Rear Facing to ___ pounds and Forward Facing to ___ pounds". Following the manufacturer's instructions will allow your child to remain the safest during travel.

What is the Safest Car Seat to Buy?

The answer to this question is simple...it is the one that fits your budget, fits your child, and fits your car. The bottom line is that every single car seat on the market has to meet the exact same safety standards. The \$40.00 car seat has to meet the same safety standards as the \$400.00 car seat. However, some of the pricier models might have extra bells and whistles, including features that make it easier to install or more comfortable padding for the baby.



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It is important to note that it is not advised to purchase a second hand car seat for two reasons. First, you will likely not know the full history of the seat. If a car seat has been involved in an accident (even a minor fender bender), it is no longer safe to use. California insurance companies are required to replace a car seat if it has been involved in an accident. Secondly, car seats expire over time due to use and degradation of the plastic and belt webbing. Some car seats actually list the expiration date on the seat. If yours does not have an expiration date listed, call the manufacturer and give them the model and production date (located on the side stickers) and they can inform you if the seat has expired. (Expiration dates are generally 6 years from the production date.)

Installing your Car Seat

Remember that all car seats do not work well in every car...you may have to experiment with different seats before you find just the right fit for your car. When purchasing a seat be certain that you save the receipt, and ask if you can exchange it for another if it does not properly fit into your car. Remember that car seats should always be installed in the back seat of your car. If you do not have a back seat, then you must be able to shut off the passenger air bag. In a crash, the air bag comes out with so much force; it can cause great injury to a child. When choosing a back seat position for your car seat, the center of the back seat would be the best choice. If you cannot achieve the proper installation in that position, then placing the car seat behind the passenger seat would be the next best choice.

Once the seating position has been determined, you will install the seat according to both the car seat manufacturer instructions, as well as by following your vehicle manual. Install your seat using either the LATCH system or the seat belt, not both. Both the seat belt and LATCH system are crash tested as safe, but *they are to be used independently*. If using the LATCH system, make certain that you are using the proper hooks for the desired seating position; this information can be found in your vehicle owner's manual.

Once you have your seat installed, place your hand along the belt path and give a nice firm tug. Your car seat should not move more than one inch side to side or front to back. If the seat has too much movement, then place your knee into the center of the seat to apply some weight and tighten the belt. This process may take several attempts, but you will reap the rewards with a nice, safe ride for your baby.

If you have any questions regarding your car seat installation, or if you are having difficulty getting your car seat installed correctly, please have it checked by a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician, like myself, who will guide you to find the perfect fit. PacifiCord offers free car seat safety classes and individual appointments to help ensure the safety of your baby.



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Avoid the Extras

Your car seat has been crash tested before it is even placed in the box. This means that any aftermarket add-ons were not tested with your seat. Please use your seat as it came, without any additions, as they can compromise the safety of the seat. This means no extra headrests, mirrors, under mats or toy bars. While all of these products seem like good ideas, they can affect the fit of the seat and can become a problem in a crash. If your child needs added head support, and your seat did not come with a headrest, you can use rolled up receiving blankets to support the baby once the baby is secure in the seat.

One last thought, take a good look around the inside of your car...anything that is unsecured (your purse, diaper bag, coffee mug, cell phone) will become a projectile in a crash, and will end up hitting something. Begin today by getting in the habit of placing miscellaneous items in the trunk of your car or by securing them with a seat belt. Nothing in the cabin of your car should be heavier than what you would throw at your baby during play...in a crash, those items can cause serious injury to you or to your child.

I wish you and your baby safe travels this summer, and I hope that you enjoy a wonderful and relaxing June!

All the Best,

Nurse Wendy

Resources:

National Highway Transportation Administration: www.nhtsa.gov
Car Safety: www.car-safety.org
Safety Belt Safe: www.carseat.org
Free Car Seat Safety Check: asknursewendy@pacificord.com



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Ask Nurse Wendy:

Dear Nurse Wendy,

I love being pregnant, but cannot stand going to the bathroom every five minutes. I have found myself limiting my fluid intake to cut back on visits to the restroom throughout the day. Is this okay?

Sincerely,

Baby Bladder

Dear Baby Bladder,

No, this is not okay! Please do not limit your fluid intake...your body and growing baby needs extra fluids for many reasons. The number one cause of preterm labor is dehydration, and as we move into the warmer days of summer, your body will need more fluids to stay healthy and help your baby stay put until your labor day arrives. Additionally, taking in plenty of fluids can keep swelling, constipation, and urinary tract infections (all common in pregnancy) at bay. During pregnancy, a woman should drink 10-12 glasses of non-caffeinated liquids every day. I understand your frustration, but while visiting the bathroom many, many, many times a day can be quite annoying, it is ensuring that you are staying well hydrated and will keep your body and your baby nice and healthy.

QUESTIONS?

Email me at: AskNurseWendy@PacifiCord.com