

Take it to the Limit

Based on new recommendations, parents are encouraged to take the time to ensure their children are in the correct seat for their age and size when riding in a car.

AAA and other safety organizations are urging parents to research and understand current best practices in child passenger safety during Child Passenger Safety Week, which runs Sept. 23-29, 2018.

AAA recommends following the car seat and child restraint guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, which in August updated its recommendations to encourage children to stay in rear-facing seats until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the seat. Previous recommendations said children could graduate to a forward-facing seat after their second birthday.

“It’s understandable that parents are often eager to move their child to the next type of seat, whether that’s a forward-facing car seat or a booster seat,” said Amy Stracke, managing director of traffic safety advocacy for AAA – The Auto Club Group and executive director of the Auto Club Group Traffic Safety Foundation. “However, with each step you lose some of the protection you had with the previous seat. Keeping children in their seat until they reach the maximum limits can be lifesaving if they’re in a crash.”

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death among children in the U.S., with an average of two children under 13 killed per day in 2016, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Compared to forward-facing car seats, rear-facing car seats limit movement of the head, neck and spine. For young children with tender and developing neck muscles, this additional support results in fewer injuries during a crash.

In addition to using the correct seat, AAA encourages parents to check for some of the most common car seat mistakes including:

- Not installing the car seat tightly enough
- Loose harness straps
- Turning your child forward facing too soon
- Moving your child out of a booster seat too soon
- Allowing a child under the age of 13 to ride in the front seat

“We want parents and caregivers to have the tools and information they need to keep their children safe,” said Gene LaDoucer, North Dakota spokesman for AAA-The Auto Club Group. “Child Passenger Safety Week is a great opportunity for people to review the latest guidelines while checking to make sure their child is in the right seat for them.”

Child Passenger Safety Week ends with National Seat Check Saturday on Sept. 29, a day that focuses on car seat safety and encourages parents to have their child’s car seat inspected by a certified car seat technician. For more information on car seat safety and child passenger safety resources, visit safeseats4kids.com.