



Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

Kids and Car Seat Safety



Introduction

Car seats keep our children safe. The law says drivers must make sure all children under five travel in approved child restraints such as baby capsules, car seats and booster seats.

It is a good idea to make using a car seat part of your routine from the start of your baby's very first car journey so that using a car seats becomes a habit.

All babies are different. Some are born easy to settle and placid, while others are wakeful and active. Some are regular in their habits from early on and others have irregular habits. Different babies will react in different ways and will need a different approach.

Here are some tips to help you keep your child safe and make car travel safe and enjoyable.

**“I kept trying,
- singing
helped!”**



Babies and establishing a new routine

- The best time to start a new routine for the car is when you are not in a rush.
- Pick a time when you are both relaxed.
- Talk to your baby about what you are doing and where you are going – just chat.
- Make sure your baby is comfortable in their car seat - warm, dry and recently fed.



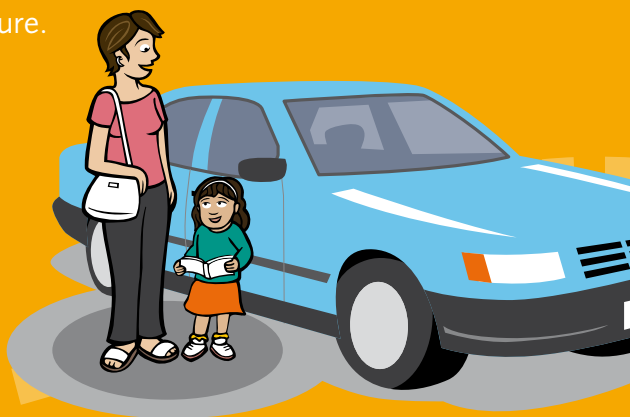
“The best tip I got was ‘slow down, don’t rush’ now my son loves going in the car.”

- Try and make putting your baby into the car seat a nice part of the day. It could be a chance to play a favourite game like 'incy wincy' spider or 'peek-a-boo'.
- Try to plan ahead so you can keep journeys short or you don't have to make too many trips in a day.
- Follow the same routine every time you travel.

Toddlers and maintaining the routine

Remember, children love praise and attention and they enjoy routines – stick to the routine and you will help them feel happy and secure.

There are always going to be times when a toddler doesn't want to go into a car seat. Don't be surprised or worried. This is normal as they start to develop their independence.



“Tell your child why they have to sit in a car seat every time you put them in the car.”

- Prepare your toddler and let them know you will be going in the car.
- Talk to your child about what you are doing and where you are going.
- If you have more than one child – think ahead and plan the safest way for getting them all into the car safely.
- Allow lots of time.
- Stop the car if your child needs your full attention or undoes the car seat straps. Explain that you are not going to start the car again until the buckle is done up.
- Let them take a favourite toy with them on the journey, or have a selection of car toys for journeys.
- Praise them when they are sitting buckled up in their seat. Reward good behaviour, tell them they are great.

3-5 year olds

Explain the rules

- "We have to do our safety belts up to keep us safe"
- "The car doesn't start until we are buckled up"

Talk about what you are doing

- "We are going in the car now so we have to do up our safety belt', or, 'click, clack I am doing it up'"

"Behave in the same way you want your children to - always wear a safety belt."

Offer distractions

- Toys, books, tapes, games and music.
- Always tell your child what the reward is for – "once you have you safety belt on we can play your tape".

Make the car seat fun

- Stick stars on it.
- Add car seat toys.
- Change the colour of the cover to match an older brother's or sister's.



Older Children

The higher you sit the safer the fit. Until your children are 148 cm tall, they are safer in a booster seat.

If your child isn't using one, try the simple test below. If you answer 'no' to any of these questions, your child is not yet ready for a safety belt and needs to be in a booster seat:

- Does your child sit all the way back against the car seat?
- Do your child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the car seat?
- Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and the arm?
- Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
- Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?



Sometimes older children feel embarrassed or too grown up to use a booster seat. You can help:

- Explain why car seats and safety belts are important for safety and continue with the rules.
- Continue to praise your child for being buckled up safely.
- Praise them for role modelling good safety to younger sisters and brothers.
- Treat being able to buckle themselves in as an important milestone.
- Make it fun as well as safe – turn it into a pirate ship, a rocket or a fairy's chariot.

The rules

The NZ Transport Agency says children under the height of 148 cm should be seated in an appropriate child restraint. The specific type of child restraint you need to use depends on the age and size of the child.

It suggests:

- Infant restraint: birth to 9 kg (approx. <6 months), or birth to 13.5 kg (approx. 1 year).
- Convertible (baby to child) restraint: birth to 18 kg (approx. 4 years).
- Front-facing child restraint: 9–18 kg (about 1 year to approx. 4 years).
- Booster seat: 14–36 kg (approx. 4 years to 7 years).
- Child safety harness: 14–32 kg (approx. 4 to 7 years).

“Children under the height of 148 cm should be seated in an appropriate child restraint”



More information

NZ Transport Agency
www.nzta.govt.nz
phone: **0800 699 000**

Safekids New Zealand
www.safekids.org.nz

Safe2Go
www.safe2go.co.nz

Plunket
www.plunket.org.nz

For your local Plunket office or Plunket car seat rental scheme, check the Plunket website or look under Plunket in your phone book.

S.K.I.P

Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

SKIP supports parents and caregivers to raise their children in a positive way.

For more information go to:
www.familyservices.govt.nz/skip/

Email: **skipinfo@msd.govt.nz**
or phone: **04 916 3300**

For more information on support for parents go to
www.familyservices.govt.nz
and click on National Directory.



family &
community services
ratonga ā-whānau, ā-hapori
A service of the Ministry of Social Development



NZ TRANSPORT AGENCY
WAKA KOTAHI

