

Information for Parents:

The Infant Car Seat Challenge

Infants born early, having a low birth weight, or having breathing or other health care issues may be at risk of health problems when placed in a semi-upright seating position, such as in a car safety seat. The problems can include difficult breathing, the heart beating too slowly, and low levels of oxygen in the blood.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that these babies be tested for breathing problems in their car seats before they leave the hospital to go home. This monitoring test will be done by a trained nurse or doctor. No blood will be taken and your baby will not be upset by the test. **The Infant Car Seat Challenge test will most likely include:**

- Testing your baby's heart rate, breathing, and blood-oxygen levels using monitor stickers on the hand or the foot.
- The test lasting 90-120 minutes or the time of your car ride home, whichever is longer.
- The test will be done when your baby is at least one day old and is getting ready to leave the hospital to go home.

Before the test, you should:

- Bring your car seat to the hospital so it can be checked for safety – the earlier you bring the car seat the better so we have time to make sure it is right for your baby.
- Bring 1-2 receiving blankets that may be used to help your baby fit into the car seat.

What is the right car seat for my baby?

- It is made for your newborn's weight and size. Most car seats are made for babies born 5 pounds or more. Some are made special for babies born 4 pounds or more.
- It is not a big seat with a tray or shield.
- The seat has not been recalled for a safety reason.
- It is not too old according to the car seat guidelines (car seats expire after 6 years, so it should be less than 6 years old).
- It is in good condition and has all its parts.
- It has never been in a car crash.
- It is clean.

If you do not have the right car seat, please let the hospital know as soon as possible.

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What else do parents need to know? The nurse doing the test will place your baby in the seat, but you need to know how to fit your baby in the seat after leaving the hospital.

- The seat's harness straps should be coming from the lowest slots, which means the straps fall at or below your baby's shoulders. Adjust them before seating your baby by following the car seat's guidelines.
- Your baby should be placed in the seat with his/her back and bottom fully against the seat back. No blankets should go behind your baby.
- Carefully pull the harness over the baby, and buckle.
- Fasten the chest clip at armpit level.
- Tighten the harness straps by pulling them near the chest clip, then pull the other strap at the bottom of the car seat that takes up slack from the shoulder harnesses. Re-adjust the chest clip if needed.
- If your baby needs more support for his/her head or trunk, use a rolled receiving blanket along the side of the child's body. Never use a head insert or pad that didn't come with the car seat and never place anything behind a child's body unless it comes with the seat.
- If your baby is sliding toward the crotch strap, place a rolled washcloth between the crotch strap and the baby's diaper, never behind the baby.



If your baby does not pass the car seat challenge test?

Some babies may show breathing or heart rate problems during the test. This may mean that your baby needs some more time to be safe in his/her car seat. The doctor will decide if your baby isn't ready to go home due to health issues, or he/she may need to go home lying flat on his/her back in a 'car bed,' which is a special safety seat available through most hospitals. If your baby is to stay at the hospital longer, then another car safety seat challenge test will be performed in a day or more.



A few more important things for parents of preemies or low birth weight babies:

- Your newborn should use his or her car safety seat for travel only.
- Limit how much traveling you do in cars and limit your baby's time in the car seat.
- Never put a baby's car safety seat in front of an 'ON' airbag.
- Always put the car seat in the back seat.
- Always have an adult ride in the back seat to watch the baby's breathing and color.

More questions on traveling safely with your children in cars? Contact a local Child Passenger Safety Technician. Go to: <http://cert.safekids.org> and click on "Find a Technician" or call 1-800-370-SEAT for Maryland Kids in Safety Seats.