



PREMATURE and SMALL BABIES:

Car Seat Tips for Discharge and the First Few Car Rides

Before baby leaves the hospital:

- **Buy** a car seat that is labeled to fit a tiny baby (3 or 4 pounds starting weight). These seats have features to make the seat safer for small babies.
- **Read** the car seat manual or watch an online video from your car seat's company to learn to adjust the harness and buckle strap to fit your baby.
- **Check** your car seat use through an online or in-person appointment with a Child Passenger Safety Technician (CPST). Important things to check include: how tight it is installed in the car, and is the seat reclined properly for a newborn.
- **Bring** your car seat into the hospital. Leave your infant car seat base installed in the car.
- **Read** the manual about any pads or inserts that come with your seat and how to use them. Don't add anything that wasn't sold with your seat.
- **Be aware:** A day or so before discharge, a nurse may perform the "Car Seat Tolerance Screen" to monitor your baby in the car seat in case there are breathing or heart problems when riding semi-upright in the car.

Turn over for more car seat tips for your growing baby.



**Find a Child
Passenger Safety
Technician to
help you with
your car seat:**

**Maryland Kids in
Safety Seats**
www.MdKISS.org
1-800-370-SEAT

**Safe Kids
World Wide**
<https://cert.safekids.org/find-tech>

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration:**
[https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/
car-seats-and-booster-seats](https://www.nhtsa.gov/equipment/car-seats-and-booster-seats)



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First few car rides:

- **Dress** your baby in clothes that are not bulky, then put the baby in the car seat and buckle the harnesses snugly. Add more clothes or blankets **OVER** the harness to keep baby warm.
- Have an adult **ride** in the back seat to watch the baby closely.
- **Properly secure** any heavy items in the car such as an oxygen tank, a monitor, or other items that could hurt the baby in a crash.
- **Travel only** for important reasons, and use the car seat properly for every ride.
- **Create** a good sleep pattern for your baby **in the crib on their back** after car rides; the car seat is not another crib.
- **Avoid** putting your baby in swings and other seats that could cause similar breathing problems as car seats, until your doctor says it is ok.



Car seat safety for a growing baby:

- **Check** your car seat manual for when to remove the body pillow or head pad, and for when and how to move the harness or buckle to “grow” with your baby.
- **Expect to switch** your baby out of an infant carrier car seat into a rear-facing convertible seat when the baby is about one year old, or baby’s head is one inch from the top of the car seat.
- **Keep** harnesses snug and buckled on a child in a car seat – even when outside of the car, and never leave a child unattended in a vehicle.



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