Information for Parents:
The Car Seat Tolerance Screen

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 child car seat. The problems can include trouble 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 and heart problems in their car seats before they leave the hospital to go home. This monitoring test will be done by trained hospital staff. No blood will be taken and your baby will not be upset by the test. **The Car Seat Tolerance Screen will most likely include:**

- Testing your baby's heart rate, breathing, and oxygen levels using monitor stickers on the hand or foot.
- Testing when your baby is at least one day old and is getting ready to leave the hospital to go home.
- Doing the test for 90-120 minutes, possibly during the night.

Before the test, you should:

- Get a car seat for your baby and read its instructions.
- Bring the car seat and its manual to the hospital several days before discharge so staff have time to check that the seat is right for your baby and to help you harness the baby in it. If your car seat has a carrying handle and a base, you can usually leave the base installed in the car and just bring in the car seat part.

What is the right car seat for my baby?

- It is made for your newborn's weight and size. Make sure your car seat is made for babies weighing as little as 3-4 pounds.
- The seat has not been recalled for a safety reason.
- It is not too old according to the car seat's guidelines. (Many car seats expire after 6 years.) Check for the label on the seat with the date of manufacture.
- It is in good condition and has all its parts.
- It is clean and has never been in a car crash. If you get a seat from someone else, ask about its history.

What else do parents need to know? If you are at the hospital for the test, staff will have you help adjust the seat to fit your baby. Turn over this page for more.

Tips for fitting the seat for your baby:

• The harness straps must come through the seat's harness slots at or below your baby's shoulders.
• The buckle strap is in the infant position and length. If there are hip strap adjustments, they are set for your baby's size.
• Only use pads that come with the seat and per the instructions.
• Do not put thick clothes on or blankets under your baby or the harness.

When you put your baby in the seat:

• Make sure his/her back and bottom are flat against the car seat with no slouching.
• The seat is reclined as the labels or indicator tell you to do.
• Baby's head lies flat against the seat back or head pillow, with the chin not resting on the chest.
• Buckle and tighten all the harness straps so you cannot pinch any webbing at the shoulder.
• Fasten the chest clip and slide it to armpit level.

Car bed

What if your baby does not pass the car seat tolerance screen?

Some babies may show breathing or heart rate problems during the test. The doctor will decide if your baby is not ready to go home or to ride in a car seat due to health issues or prematurity. If your baby is to stay at the hospital longer, then there will be another car seat test in a day or more. A few babies may be tested lying flat on their back in a **car bed**, and may be sent home in this special car seat that the hospital will help you get and show you how to use.

Other important tips 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 you travel and how much your baby is in the car seat.
• Never put a baby's car seat in front of an 'ON' airbag.
• Always put the car seat in the back seat.
• An adult should ride in the back to watch the baby's breathing and skin tone.

More questions on traveling safely with your children? 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.