

## Child Passenger Safety

Let me start by saying that protecting your child by using car seats is one of the best ways to begin a lifetime of safety and safe practices. When traveling in a car with children, the first thing to do is make sure that they are fastened securely in their car seats. After you get in, it is just as important that you buckle up. You are the most important person in your children's lives, and they not only watch to see what you do, but imitate your actions—whether good or bad. If you want to instill a lifetime of car safety behaviors, begin by being a good example and showing your child the right things to do.

The U.S. Department of Transportation has recently released their statistics on car seats:

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children of every age from two to fourteen years old. (National Center for Health Statistics)
- An average of seven children (ages one day through fifteen years) were killed and 830 were injured each day in crashes in the United States during 2002. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration -NHTSA)
- The use of child restraints in vehicles falls from 91% to 69% when children reach age four. (NHTSA)
- An estimated 80% to 90% of children who should be using a booster seat are not. (NHTSA)
- More than 40% of child passengers under age eight who die or suffer incapacitating injuries in crashes are completely unrestrained. (NHTSA)
- In Michigan, safety belt or child restraint laws cover all children.

### The "4 STEPS FOR KIDS" are as follows...

Step 1: Use a rear-facing infant seat in the back seat from birth to at least one year old and up to 20 pounds.

Step 2: Use forward-facing toddler seats in the back seat from age one to about age four and 20 – 40 pounds.

Step 3: Use booster Seats in the back seat from about age four and 40 pounds to at least eight years unless 4'9" tall.

Step 4: Use seat Belts at age eight or older or taller than 4'9".

In addition, all children twelve and under should ride in the back seat. In any stage, proper use of a child safety seat prevents the child from being thrown from the car or truck in a crash.

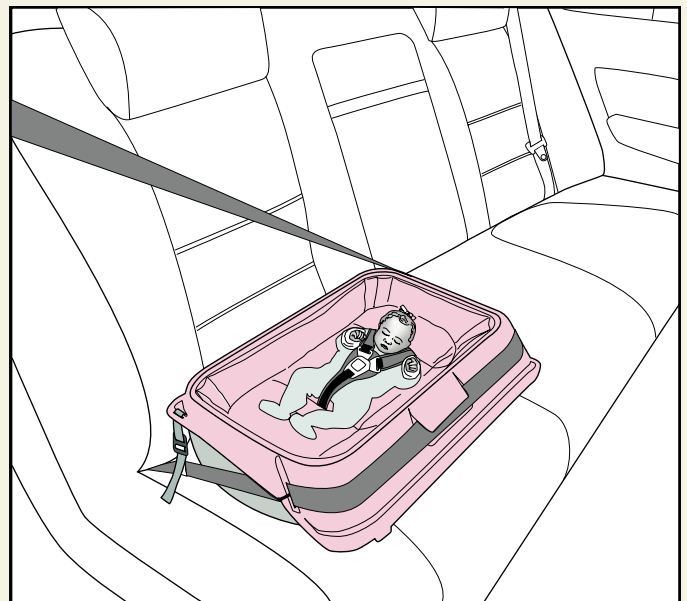


### Types of Car Restraints

All children deserve to be protected as occupants in motor vehicles in restraint systems appropriate for their size and development. Following are the basic types of car restraints suggested for your child based on age and size.

#### Infant Car Bed

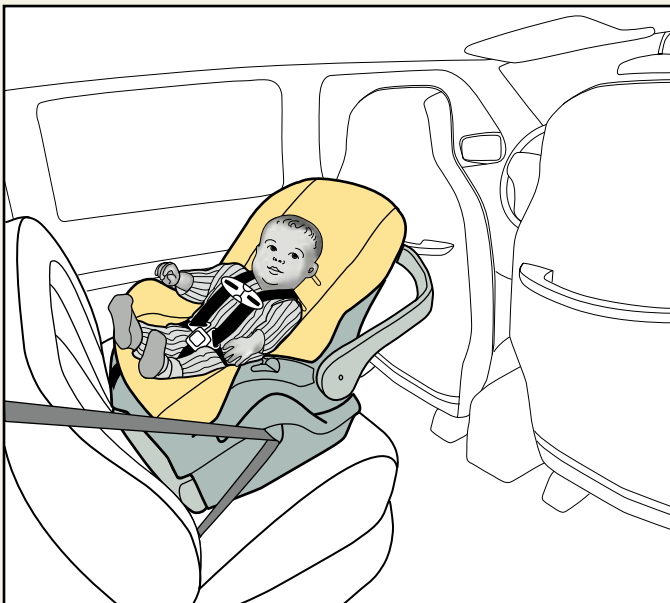
For very small infants weighing less than 5.5 pounds, the infant car bed is designed to hold an infant on a continuous flat surface with their head resting toward the center of the vehicle.



## Types of Car Restraints *continued*

### Rear Facing Car Seat

This restraint positions an infant to face opposite the direction the vehicle is moving. It gives the infant's head, neck and body the support needed in the event of a crash or sudden stop. This restraint accommodates infants up to 20 pounds, 19-26" long, and up to one year. Some rear facing infant seats come in two parts: The base stays securely in the vehicle and the seat snaps in and out.



### Forward Facing Child Seat

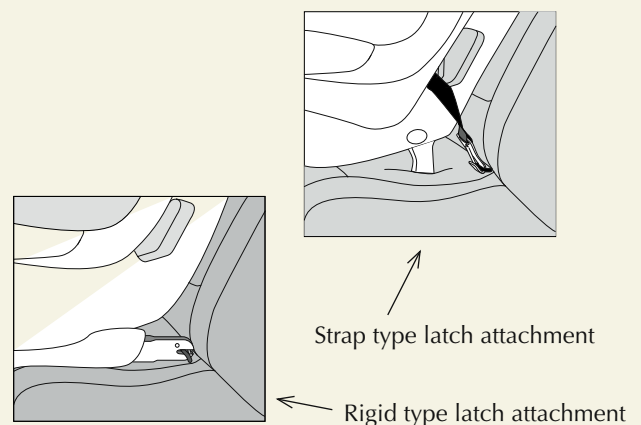
Forward facing seats are designed for children who are at least one year of age and at least 20-30 pounds. There are different types of forward facing seats, including forward facing only seats with harnesses, forward facing only seats with harnesses that can be changed to belt-positioning boosters by removing the harness (combination child safety seat/boosters) and belt-positioning boosters.



**NOTE:** Car seat information provided sets forth some of the factors that parents should consider before selecting and using a car safety seat. This information should not be used as a substitute for manufacturer's specifications, state regulations, medical care and /or advice of your pediatrician.

Some children have medical conditions or procedures requiring special consideration when selecting restraints. For more information on this topic, log on to [www.preventinjury.org](http://www.preventinjury.org) and select Special Needs Transportation / Restraints. This website covers everything from specialized medical seats to upright vests.

If you need help in finding a child car safety seat or installing one, you can go on line to [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov) or call the Department of Transportation Auto Safety Hotline at: 1-888-DASH-2-DOT or 1-888-327-4236. ❖



## Types of Car Restraints *continued*

### *About the Author*

*Edward Dabrowski, M.D., is the Pediatric Program Medical Director for Rainbow Rehabilitation Centers, Inc. Dr. Dabrowski received his degree from Wayne State University School of Medicine and is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Dabrowski has extensive faculty and professional appointments, and he currently serves as Chief of the Division of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services for Children's Hospital of Michigan in addition to Program Director of Combined Pediatric/PM&R Residency Program and Co-Director for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Southeastern Michigan. He specializes in pediatric traumatic brain injury, neuromuscular conditions and spasticity.*

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