

Which Seat is Right for You?

Under North Carolina law (G.S. § 20-137.1), children must be properly restrained in an appropriate car seat or booster seat until they are 8 years old or 80 pounds and until the seat belt fits properly.



REAR-FACING SEATS

Birth Until at Least 2 Years Old

- Children should ride rear-facing as long as possible, but at least until two years old.
- There are different types of rear-facing car seats: rear-facing only, convertible and 3-in-1.
- Rear-facing only seats typically have a handle and are removable from the base, allowing for ease of use in the earlier stages.
- Convertible and 3-in-1 car seats typically have higher height and weight limits for the rear-facing position, allowing you to keep your child rear-facing for a longer period of time.
- Car seats should allow for the harness straps to be at or below shoulder level.
- Check the car seat labels for height and weight limits.



FORWARD-FACING SEATS

2 Years and Older

- For best protection, children should remain rear-facing until at least 2 years old.
- There are different types of forward-facing car seats: convertible, 3-in-1 and combination.
- In a convertible seat, a child should remain rear-facing until the child reaches the top height or weight limit allowed by the car seat's manufacturer.
- Check the car seat labels for height and weight limits.
- Car seats should allow for the harness straps to be at or above shoulder level.
- Children should ride in a seat with a harness as long as possible.



BOOSTER SEATS

At Least 4 Years Old and 40 Pounds

- Children should remain in a forward-facing seat with a harness as long as possible.
- There are two types of booster seats: backless booster and high-back booster.
- A booster seat positions the seat belt so it fits properly over the shoulder and low on the child's hips.
- Use a high-back booster for vehicle seats without a head restraint.
- Check the booster seat labels for age, height and weight limits.



SEAT BELTS

At Least 8 Years Old or 80 Pounds and 4'9" Tall

- Children should remain in a booster seat until they are big enough that a seat belt fits them properly.
- Seat belts are appropriate when the child is more than 8 years old, 80 pounds and around 4'9" in height.
- The child's back should be positioned firmly against the vehicle seat back, and knees should be bent at the front edge of the seat.
- The lap belt must sit low on the child's hips.
- The shoulder belt should cross over the shoulder and collar bone.
- Children should remain in the back seat until they are at least 13 years old.

