

Air Bag Safety

An air bag can save your life. However, air bags and young children do not mix. The following information will help keep you and your children safe:

- The safest place for *all* infants and children younger than 13 years to ride is in the back seat.
- *Never* put an infant in the front seat of a car, truck, SUV, or van with an air bag.
- Infants must always ride in rear-facing car safety seats in the back seat until they are at least 20 pounds AND at least 1 year of age. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants ride rear-facing until they reach the maximum weight and height allowed by the manufacturer for use of the car safety seat.
- All children should be properly secured in car safety seats, belt-positioning booster seats, or the shoulder/lap belts correct for their size.
- Seat belts must be worn correctly at all times by all passengers who have outgrown booster seats and fit shoulder/lap belts properly to provide the best protection.
- Side air bags improve safety for adults in side impact crashes, but children who are not properly restrained and are seated near a side air bag may be at risk for serious injury. Check your vehicle owner's manual to see what it says about children and side air bags.
- You may have heard recently about new "advanced" air bags. These make travel safer for adults, but it is not yet known how they will affect the safety of children. Even though these new air bags may be safer, the back seat is still the safest place for children younger than 13 years to ride.

What Parents Can Do

- Eliminate potential risks of air bags to children by buckling them in the *back* seat for every ride.
- Plan ahead so that you do not have to drive with more children than can be safely restrained in the back seat.
- For most families, installation of air bag on/off switches is not necessary. Air bags that are turned off provide no protection to older children, teens, parents, or other adults riding in the front seat.
- Air bag on/off switches should only be used if your child has special health care needs for which your pediatrician recommends constant observation during travel, and no other adult is available to ride in the back seat with your child.
- If no other arrangement is possible and an older child *must* ride in the front seat, move the vehicle seat back as far as it can go, away from the air bag. Be sure the child is restrained properly for his size. Keep in mind that your child may still be at risk for injuries from the air bag. The back seat is the safest place for children to ride.

For more information, contact the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#).

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.