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Safe Car, Safe Car Seat – Is it Enough?

You've got a baby on the way, and planning is in full swing. Just like all parents, you want to protect your child, and you're taking steps to do anything you can to keep your child safe. If you don't yet have a car seat, you have likely thought about which one is the best—and the safest. You're probably willing to spend more, maybe a lot more, to protect your child with the best seat.

In the city of Chicago, 84 percent of infant car seats are used or installed incorrectly, and certified car seat technicians believe the real number is at least 90 percent. That's more than four out of five seats. What's so alarming about this statistic is that children in misused car seats are not fully protected in an accident.

No matter which type of car seat you choose, no matter how much money you spend on it and how good you are at understanding and following the installation instructions, the likelihood that you will improperly install your car seat is high. Very high.

You're not alone

Fortunately, there is help. The problem is that all cars and all car seats are different, and car seat installation manuals are not car-specific, which makes proper car seat fit almost impossible to achieve without the help of a professional. There is a plethora of information on the Internet, but much of it is conflicting, so it's important to use a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) technician to fit your seat to your car.

Fortunately, there is help

You can have your car seat professionally installed for proper fit. Northwestern Memorial Hospital has teamed up with trained and certified CPS technicians Brooks Watson and Steve Breden of [The Safety Squad](#) to offer private, [30 minute car seat instruction appointments](#). This class is much more than a car seat safety check. Think of it as an education and a way to ensure important protection for your child.

Installation by a certified CPS technician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital offers:

- **Peace of Mind** – you'll know you've done all you can to ensure your child's safety
- **Customer Service** – you will get personalized attention for a full 30 minutes or longer if necessary
- **Car Seat Registration** – all seats that are installed through this class will be registered, so if there is ever a recall, you will be notified via email within 24-48 hours of the recall
- **Convenience** – schedule the appointment when you can, and you won't have to wait in long lines

We encourage you to make an appointment with the technicians well before your due date so you'll be prepared the day you take your new baby home from the hospital. There are so many things to think about during those final days of your pregnancy, and it is easy to forget that you should have your car seat installed properly before you go into labor. There won't be anyone at the hospital to help you after your baby is born, so planning ahead is important. Call **(877) 926-4664** today.

Here are some important facts about car seat and automobile safety

- Motor vehicle collisions are number one killer of small children
- A properly fitted car seat can reduce fatal injuries in motor vehicle accidents*
 - 71 percent for infants
 - 54 percent for toddlers
- The back seat is always safer than the front seat, and all children under the age of 13 must now sit in the back seat
 - Rear-facing car seats are always safer than forward-facing seats

- There is a great risk of crash-related injury if you move to forward facing seats too early
- The one year, 20 pound mark is a minimum recommendation. You can and should keep your child in a rear-facing car seat as long you can.

For more information about car seat safety, read the American Academy of Pediatrics [Car Seat Safety Guide](#).

What the technicians recommend

- Use infant seats from birth to the maximum weight and height limit of your infant seat (22-30 pounds, depending on the seat)
- Switch to rear-facing convertible seats after your infant seat and stay rear-facing to the upper rear-facing limit of your convertible seat (often 30-35 pounds)
- Buy forward facing car seats with a high weight limit (65-80 pounds)
- Don't rush into booster seats
 - Putting children into booster seats too early risks an ill fit and injury
 - The five-point harness offered by a convertible seat is always safer than the booster seat with the vehicles seat belt
- Each time you buy a new seat, have it installed by a certified CPS technician

Brooks Watson, certified CPS technician at Safety Squad, states they often “see that parents tend to rush each transition step, from rear-facing to forward facing to booster use.” He recommends that “as long as your child has not exceeded the limits of your particular car seat, the transitions should be delayed beyond the minimum guidelines.”

Don't delay – make an appointment today

[Car seat installation appointments](#) are currently available Wednesday and Friday evenings starting at 5 p.m. and on Saturday beginning at 8:30 a.m. Call **(877) 926-4664** to find an available time. We also encourage all new and expectant parents to enroll in Northwestern Memorial's [Infant/Pediatric CPR and Safety class](#) and other [parenting classes](#) at the hospital.

We know how important your child's safety is to you, and we want to help. The most important thing you can do to protect your child in the event of an accident is to use a properly fitted car seat. Call **(877) 926-4664** today to make your appointment.

* These statistics are compared with accidents when no car seat is used.