

Shopping for your baby's first car seat can be overwhelming. There are so many makes and models from which to choose.

This pamphlet has been designed to help you make an informed decision when purchasing a car seat for your new baby.

Using an infant car seat involves two main steps:

☺ harnessing your baby in the seat correctly

☺ putting the seat in your vehicle correctly

The seat that you choose should be easy for you to use and should fit correctly in your vehicle(s).

Selecting Your Baby's Car Seat:

The car seat that provides the best fit for a newborn is the Infant-only seat. These seats are designed to be used rear-facing only, unlike the larger Convertible seats or 3-Stage seats that can be used both rear- and forward-facing. Often, these seats are too big to secure an infant's smaller body tightly. Also, even with the harness in its lowest position, it may be above the newborn's shoulders, which is not safe.

Infant-only seats are smaller, and have handles for easier carrying. They come with a base that remains belted in the vehicle when you remove the infant seat. You do not have to adjust and tighten the seat belt or Universal Anchorage System (UAS) every time you put the infant seat in the car. It is important to ensure that the infant seat is properly attached to the base. All current models can be used with, or without, the base.



There are also infant seat/stroller combinations. Assess the car seat and stroller separately. Remember, babies often outgrow an Infant-only seat between 4 and 8 months-of-age. You will use the stroller much longer.

Make sure that you choose a seat that will meet the needs of your growing baby. Current models of Infant-only seats start at 1.8 or 2.3 kg (4 or 5 lb.) and have an upper weight limit of 10, 13.5, or 16 kg (22, 30, or 35 lb.), depending on the model.

Price and Expiry Date:

The price of a seat is not an indicator of its safety. All seats must pass strict Canadian standards. Some features, however, may make the seat easier to use and, therefore, more likely to be used correctly. Manufacturers put an expiry date on their seats or in their instructions. Check the expiry date to be sure that the time period will cover your baby's needs.

Check the Labels and Instructions:

When purchasing a new infant seat, you will notice a round sticker on it that indicates the seat meets Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (CMVSS). Only seats that meet the Canadian standard are legal for use in Canada.



Look at the manufacturer's instructions, both on the seat itself and in the instruction manual. *Are they easy for you to understand? Do they give clear directions with helpful diagrams?*

Check the Harness System:

Is it easy to change the harness to another level as your baby grows? This is important both for safety and comfort. The harness must come through the back of the seat at the level of, or slightly **below**, the baby's shoulders, never from above.



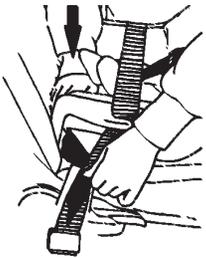
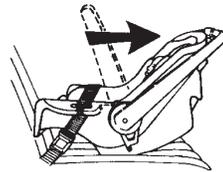
Different models of Infant-only seats have different harness adjustment mechanisms. Make sure that you, and anyone else who puts your baby in the car seat, are comfortable with how the harness adjusts. If the harness is difficult to adjust, you may be tempted not to bother, resulting in the baby not being properly restrained in the event of a crash.

Check How the Infant Seat Fits in Your Vehicle(s):

Not all car seats fit correctly in all vehicles. Trying out the infant seat before you buy it, to make sure that it fits in your vehicle, would be ideal. If you are unable to do this, make sure that the store will allow you to return the seat for a full refund, if it cannot be properly installed in your vehicle(s).

Check that at least 80% of the base of the infant seat fits on the vehicle seat. Also, is there enough room (front-to-back) for a rear-facing seat? If all rear seating positions are required, due to family size or car pooling, will the infant seat be able to be secured properly? Is there enough hand clearance, or access, to fasten the seat belt or UAS?

Check the car seat manual to see if the carry handle should be up or down in the vehicle. *If the carry handle must be down, is there enough room to properly position the handle when the seat is installed?*



Check your vehicle owner's manual for information on correctly securing a car seat with your seat belts or UAS. When tightening the seat belt or UAS, push the infant seat base down and into the upholstery. The infant seat should not move more than 2.5 cm (1 in.) toward the front of the vehicle, or directly side-to-side where the belt is attached.

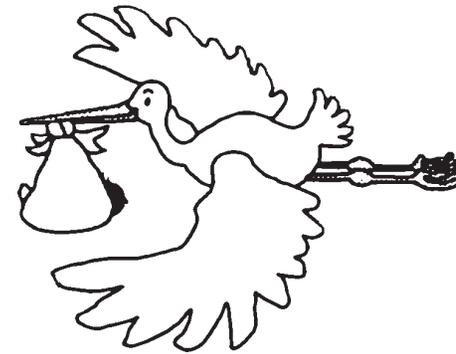
It is acceptable (and normal) to be able to lift the top part of the car seat toward the rear of the vehicle or pivot it side-to-side.

It is time for your baby to come out of an Infant-only seat when he is over the seat's upper weight limit **or** the top of the baby's head is 2.5 cm (1 in.) below the top of the car seat. He should then go into a Convertible or 3-Stage seat, used rear-facing, until it is safe for him to travel facing forward, 2 or more years-of-age.

For more information, go to our website: www.infantandtoddlersafety.ca

Infant & Toddler Safety Association

Shopping for Baby's



First Car Seat



(519)570-0181

(888)570-0181

