

Children's Health and Toyota Bring Car Seat Safety to the Streets of North Texas

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Plano, Texas (March 23, 2017) – In Texas, one motor vehicle crash occurred every 61 seconds in 2015.¹ However, a properly installed car seat can help dramatically reduce injury and prevent death in the case of a crash. That's why Toyota and Cincinnati Children's are working with Children's HealthSM, the leading pediatric health care system in North Texas, to bring the national safety program *Buckle Up for Life* to families in North Texas.

"Car crashes are the No. 1 leading cause of death for children. Correctly installed car seats save lives, and we see proof of this in our emergency rooms every day," said Claudia Romo, director of the Injury Prevention Service at Children's Health. "Through our combined efforts with *Buckle Up for Life* and Toyota, we are equipping families with the skills and tools they need to be better prepared and safer on the roads of North Texas and beyond."

During *Buckle Up for Life*'s program, trained specialists work closely with parents and caregivers to teach them about all aspects of car seats, booster seats and seat belts. The classes are offered in English and Spanish, and free car seats are provided to families in need. Community members who are interested in learning more can call the Children's Health Car Seat Program at 214-456-2059.

"Many people are surprised to learn that a staggering three out of four car seats are incorrectly installed," said Mike Goss, general manager, Toyota Social Innovation.² "That's why *Buckle Up for Life* is so important. We want every family to have the education and guidance they need to help keep their children safe. We are proud to partner with our friends at Children's Health to bring this life-saving program to our neighbors in our new home in Texas."

Buckle Up for Life is offering the following critical tips to caregivers to help keep all children safe.

1. **Check for fit and wrinkles in car seat straps.** After you've buckled your child in, pinch the car seat strap near their shoulders. If you can pinch a wrinkle in the fabric, tighten the strap until it is snug. Then grab the car seat at the bottom where it is attached to the car and tug from side to side and front to back. If the seat moves more than an inch in either direction, tighten it.
2. **Use a new car seat.** When it comes to car seats, safety experts agree that it's best to use a new seat. This lets you know the seat's full history. For example, if it has been through a crash, it may not protect your child from harm. Additionally, the plastic can degrade over time in the Texas heat. If you do have a used car seat, check its expiration date, which can usually be found on a sticker affixed to the seat.
3. **Make sure your child's seat faces the correct way.** Some parents and caregivers may wonder when it's safe to turn the car seat around to face forward. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children remain in rear-facing car seats until age 2, or until they exceed the height and/or weight limit for the seat.
4. **Give them a boost: children under 8 years old and shorter than 4'9" need booster seats.** Little ones can be eager to sit like big kids. However, seat belts often don't fit young children properly and can ride up around their waists or necks, potentially causing injury during a crash. Children under 8 years old and shorter than 4'9" should sit in booster seats, which elevate them so that seat belts can fit properly.

5. **Call in the experts: there are many resources to help you get it right.** Don't hesitate to check out expert resources for additional tips and advice, such as the car seat installation videos found on BuckleUpForLife.org. The site also offers links to car seat inspection stations or child passenger safety technicians in your community. You can also call the Children's Health Car Seat Program at 214-456-2059 to make an appointment for a car seat check in the North Texas area.

"These tips may seem simple, but they could make the difference in saving a child's life in the event of a crash – and our children deserve no less," said Gloria Del Castillo, child passenger safety expert at Cincinnati Children's and senior outreach specialist for *Buckle Up for Life*. "We're delighted to partner with the terrific team at Children's Health, who are leaders in safeguarding the Dallas community."

1. http://ftp.dot.state.tx.us/pub/txdot-info/trf/crash_statistics/2015/01.pdf
2. <https://www.safercar.gov/Vehicle-Shoppers/Resources/LATCH>