

Summer Travel Safety Alert: Five Must-Know Car Seat Tips for Child Passengers

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New York, N.Y., June 9, 2015 — Heading out for a road trip with your family this summer? Got your sunscreen? Check. Road tunes? Check. Sunglasses? Check. A properly installed car seat? The answer may not be as simple as you think.

In fact, many people are surprised to learn that a staggering three out of four car seats are incorrectly installed. This is so alarming because motor vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of death among children. However, a properly installed car seat can dramatically reduce injury and prevent death.

That's why as travel season heats up, [*Buckle Up for Life*](#), the national child passenger safety program from Cincinnati Children's and Toyota, released the following must-know tips for keeping child passengers safe this summer:

1. **Always use the "Inch Test" and the "Pinch Test".** *Pinch* the car seat strap near the child's shoulder; if you can pinch a wrinkle in the fabric, tighten the strap until it is snug. For the *"Inch Test,"* grab the car seat from the back and bottom and tug from side to side and front to back. If the seat moves more than an inch in either direction, tighten it.
2. **Never add towels or extra layers between the seat and your child.** Car seats can get hot in summer weather, and sticky treats like ice cream can cause spills – but don't be tempted to pile up towels in your child's seat to keep them cool or tidy. Extra material could interfere with the seat's ability to restrain the child in the event of a crash, so it is important to only use accessories and products specifically approved for use by the seat's manufacturer.
3. **Take time to cool off; then buckle up.** If the car seat is hot because of high summer temperatures, take some extra time to cool the car down before placing your child in the seat. Open the windows, turn on the air conditioner, and test to ensure plastic or metal buckles are not hot. Once the seat's temperature has reached a comfortable level, always buckle your child in as usual – even for short trips. Never leave children alone in the car, especially in the summer, when temperatures can escalate dangerously in a matter of minutes.
4. **Don't rent a car seat.** If you are renting a car this summer, use your own car seat. When you rent a seat you don't know important facts about its history that could affect its ability to protect your child (e.g., expiration date, crash history, etc.) The good news is that most airlines allow you to check your car seat for free.

5. **Secure loose items in the car.** Make sure all loose items – particularly summer travel essentials such as beach chairs, coolers, umbrellas and suitcases – are tightly secured in your vehicle. These objects could become projectiles in the event of a crash.

“Summer is a wonderful time to travel with your family and build memories that will last a lifetime, but it’s important that parents and caregivers do all they can to make sure their littlest passengers are protected,” said Gloria DelCastillo, child passenger safety expert at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital and national program manager for *Buckle Up for Life*. “This summer, we hope all families will put these safety precautions in place before getting on the road.”

The tips are part of *Buckle Up for Life*’s mission to educate families about the proper use of car seats and seat belts and provide free car seats to families in need. Over the last ten years, *Buckle Up for Life* has grown to include a network of 14 of the nation’s leading children’s hospitals and has educated more than 17,000 people. Toyota’s sponsorship has provided funding for over 40,000 car seats for families in need. To learn more visit www.BuckleUpforLife.org.