

Buckling Down on Car Seats for National Safety Month

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PLANO, Texas (June 14, 2019) — What if there was a way to help prevent one of the leading causes of childhood death, but three out of four of us were doing it incorrectly? What if you found out we were talking about something as ordinary as a car seat? What would you do?

For Gloria Del Castillo, the answer has always been clear: help more families get it right. That's why she is so passionate about *Buckle Up for Life* and her role as Senior Specialist of Community Engagement. *Buckle Up for Life* is a national safety program from Toyota and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center that educates parents and caregivers about the proper use of car seats, booster seats and seat belts. The program also provides free car seats to participating families in need.

Since its launch in 2004, *Buckle Up for Life* has impacted more than 100,000 people and given more than 60,000 car seats to families in need. But the work is far from over. With Toyota's support, *Buckle Up for Life* expands to new cities each summer and continues to provide guidance and education throughout the year on BuckleUpforLife.org.

"While it's true that cars and trucks are safer than ever, a properly installed car seat can mean the difference between life and death in a crash," said Del Castillo. "According to the CDC, car seats reduce the risk for injury in a crash by 71 to 82 percent for children when compared with seat belt use alone. That's why *Buckle Up for Life* is so important and why I'm so inspired to keep expanding the program."

Al Smith, Group Vice President, Chief Social Innovation Officer for Toyota Motor North America added, "We've been so proud to partner with Cincinnati Children's to expand *Buckle Up for Life* from a local program to a national network of community organizations in 49 states. We look forward to empowering even more parents and caregivers with the education and resources they need to help keep their families safe."

In honor of National Safety Month in June, *Buckle Up for Life* is sharing expert advice to help families keep their littlest passengers safe during the busy summer travel season and beyond.

Top Car Seat Tips and Techniques from Buckle Up for Life:

1. **Use the "Inch Test" and "Pinch Test":** After you've buckled your child into their car seat, pinch the 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. **Save the Towels for Your Beach Chair:** Car seats can get hot in the summer weather, however don't place towels between your child and their car seat to keep them cool. Extra material could interfere with the seat's ability to restrain the child in the event of a crash.
3. **Just like Sunscreen, Car Seats Expire:** Extreme weather changes can be stressful on car seat components. It is best to check the expiration date on your car seat, as the plastic in the seat and the integrity of the fabric in the straps can degrade over time. The expiration date can usually be found on a sticker affixed to the seat or the registration card.

4. **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.

5. **Don't rent a car seat:** If you are renting a car this summer, use your own car seat. When you rent a car 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.

For more information on how to help keep child passengers safe, please visit BuckleUpforLife.org to access helpful articles, car seat installation videos and more.