



Car Safety for Infants Born Prematurely or with Low Birth Weight

Infants born prematurely or with low birth weight may have special needs that can affect how they travel. This brochure answers some questions you may have about transporting your infant.

What car seat is best for my baby born prematurely?

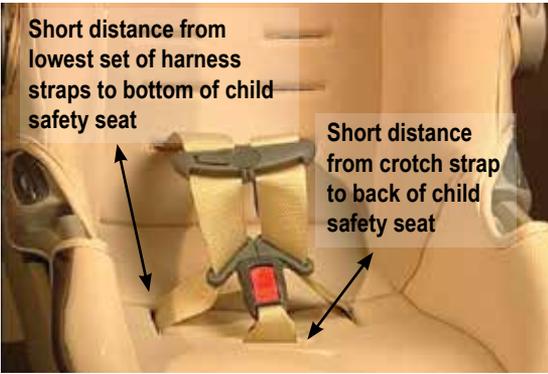


Figure 1

A car seat that meets federal safety standards and fits your small baby is best. Your infant should fit in the weight and height requirements of the car safety seat. Choosing a seat that has a smaller harness and many harness slots may fit your baby better. The distance from the lowest set of harness slots to the bottom of the child safety seat should be short enough so that the harness is at or below the baby's shoulders (*Figure 1*). The distance from the crotch strap to the back of the seat should be short enough so that the baby's bottom is held back against the child safety seat and does not slide forward (*Figure 1*).



Figure 2

The harness should be positioned at or below your baby's shoulders and the chest clip positioned at armpit level. You know the harness is tight enough if your fingers slide off the harness when you pinch the webbing at your child's shoulder (*Figure 2*).



Figure 3

My baby's head and body lean to the side when in her car seat. What can I do to make her fit better?

Many car seats come with built-in head supports or inserts for smaller babies that have been crash-tested for use with the seat (*Figure 3*).

Insert



Figure 4

If your baby needs more support for her head or trunk, you can use a rolled blanket or towel along each side of your child's body (*Figure 4*). You can also place a rolled washcloth or diaper between the crotch strap and your baby's diaper to help keep her bottom against the back of the seat and prevent slouching forward.



Figure 5

Never use a head support insert or padding that does not come with your car seat. There are no federal safety standards for these products (*Figure 5*).

I was told that my baby needs to be observed in a car seat before we can leave the hospital. What does this mean?



Figure 6

Some infants born prematurely experience breathing problems when they are sitting semi-reclined in a child safety seat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants born prematurely or with some other medical conditions be observed for breathing-related problems before they are discharged from the hospital nursery (*Figure 6*).

Ask your baby's doctor or nurse if your baby needs to be observed in her car safety seat before hospital discharge.

How should my baby travel if she has breathing-related problems?

If your baby has problems with breathing, heart rate or oxygen levels when sitting in a car safety seat, she may have to travel flat in a car bed that meets federal safety standards. A car bed allows your baby to lie down when she travels. Check with your baby's doctor or nurse about which car bed is best for your infant and where you can get one (Figures 7,8,9).



Figure 7



Figure 8



Figure 9

Car Bed	Weight	Height	Phone	Websites
Angel Ride (Fig. 7)	Less than 9 pounds	Up to 21 ¹ / ₂ inches	330-723-5928	www.angle-guard.com
Dream Ride SE (Fig. 8)	5-20 pounds	19-26 inches	800-544-1108	www.djgusa.com
Hope (Fig. 9)	4.5-35 pounds	Up to 29 inches	317-409-0148	www.eztether.com

If my baby has to travel in a car bed, when will she be able to use a rear-facing car seat?

If your baby is using a car bed, your physician may consider scheduling a test in her rear-facing car seat to measure her heart rate, breathing and oxygen levels within several weeks after discharge. This test might be done at home (oxypneumocardiogram), at the hospital (a polysomnogram), or at an outpatient clinic by direct monitoring of the heart rate, breathing and oxygen levels when in the car safety seat.

Where should I put medical equipment in the car?

There are no straps or belts specifically made for securing equipment in a vehicle. Place medical equipment such as apnea monitors on the floor of the vehicle wedged with pillows, foam or blankets (*Figure 10*). Equipment can also be secured with unused seat belts. Some vehicles do not allow putting objects under the front passenger seat as they may interfere with advanced airbag sensors. Check the vehicle owner’s manual.



Figure 10

Other considerations when traveling with your infant born prematurely or your low birth weight baby:

- Minimize travel
- Travel with an adult in the back seat to observe your baby
- Never place your car seat in front of an airbag
- Only use your car seat for travel
- Never leave your child unattended in a car seat in or out of the car

Are there any car safety seats for infants who weigh less than 5 pounds?

Yes. Some infant seats do not have a minimum weight or have a minimum weight of 4 pounds. It is best if your baby's weight is within the range required by the manufacturer of the car seat.

How can I be sure my baby is buckled up correctly?

Always read and follow the directions that come with your car safety seat and your vehicle owner's manual. You can find a certified child passenger safety technician who is trained in special needs transportation at <http://cert.safekids.org>. Click on "Find a Tech." In the CPS Technician search form, make sure to click "Special Needs" in the Extra Training field. If there is not someone trained in special needs transportation in your area, please call 800-755-0912 for further assistance.

For more information contact:
National Center for the Safe Transportation of Children
with Special Healthcare Needs
Indiana University School of Medicine
800-755-0912
www.preventinjury.org

Inclusion of products in this brochure does not imply endorsement.

Figure 7 source: www.angel-guard.com

Figure 8 source: www.djgusa.com

Figure 9 source: www.eztether.com



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This brochure was developed by the National Center for the Safe Transportation of Children with Special Healthcare Needs and funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Safety Council. The views contained in this document are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Revised 01-21-15
P-01-21-15