

Child Safety Update



Traveling With Kids—Be Car Seat Smart

(NAPSA)—Road trips with children can be daunting, but with AAA's expert advice, your next family car trip can be both safe and fun:

- Involve your children early on when planning a road trip. Let them help decide places to stop.

- Give kids a map so they can see where you are and how far it is to your destination.

- Remember, loose items in the car can be dangerous in a crash or just a sudden stop. Keep loose items in the trunk, a console or under a cargo net.

- Be sure children are secure in the proper car seats. Each year, more than 1,000 kids die and 170,000 are injured in car crashes—but giving them the proper protection will help keep them safe.

Following these best practice recommendations will ensure your children are as safe as possible on the road:

First, remember that the back-seat is the safest place for all kids under 13. Toddlers should be kept in rear-facing seats for as long as possible, until reaching the height or weight limits of the car seat, typically around age 2. Children who have outgrown the harnesses on their forward-facing car seats can use a booster seat to help position them so the lap/shoulder belt fits properly across their hips and upper thighs and across their chest and collarbone. The American Academy of Pediatrics says children should remain in a booster seat until they have reached 4'9" in height, which is typically between ages 8 and 12. A child is ready to move from a booster seat to a lap/shoulder belt if the following criteria are met:



Protect your precious cargo: Be sure your child's car seat is properly installed and remember to use it every ride.

- The child can sit all the way back against the vehicle seat;

- The child's knees can bend comfortably at the edge of the vehicle seat;

- The lap/shoulder belt crosses the child's shoulder between the neck and arm and the lap belt remains low across the thighs and hips;

- And, the child can remain in this position for the duration of the ride.

Before heading out on your trip, be sure that your child's car seat is installed properly. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, three out of four car seats are incorrectly installed. It's important to read the owner's manual for both the vehicle and the car seat before attempting the installation. Fortunately, Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians are available to advise you. You can find them through an AAA office, by calling (866) SEAT-CHECK or by visiting www.seatcheck.org. Another way to protect children all over the country, the experts at AAA say, is to strengthen child passenger safety laws. Learn more at www.SafeSeats4Kids.AAA.com.