

Pointers For Parents

Child Passenger Safety Week Focuses On Booster Seats

(NAPSA)—While most parents know it's important to use child safety seats, many do not follow the four steps recommended for restraining children as they grow.

Although motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for children age 4 to 14, a third of all children in the U.S. age 14 and under are riding in the wrong restraint type for their age and size, according to a 2002 observational study conducted by the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that parents follow the *4 Steps for Kids*, a process that



graduates a child from a rear-facing infant seat, to a forward-facing toddler seat, then to a booster seat, and finally to a safety belt.

The step that parents most often miss is using a booster seat after a child has outgrown a forward-facing toddler seat. In fact, fewer than six percent of children who should be in a booster seat use one, according to NHTSA. Lap and shoulder belts are designed for an adult's body and do not protect young children in a crash. Moreover, a safety belt that doesn't fit right can cause serious injuries to a young child in a crash. A booster seat raises a child up so that the safety belt can fit properly.

Because seven million children are in child care, during the upcoming national Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Week (February 9-15), NHTSA and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign will reinforce the safety message by training child care providers nationwide about child passenger safety laws, child seat installation, and

the importance of following the 4 Steps for Kids. They will use a curriculum developed by NHTSA and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Though every State and the District of Columbia have child seat laws, many only require that children be placed in a safety seat up to around age 4. NHTSA recommends that parents follow the 4 Steps for Kids and make sure children are properly restrained on every trip.

To help parents, NHTSA's *Buckle Up America* Campaign has developed several new materials for this year's CPS Week, including a booklet that details each of the 4 Steps for Kids and a brochure about buying and using booster seats. These materials may be available at a police department, traffic safety or pediatrician's office; or online at the NHTSA Web site at www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Need help with your child safety seat? Visit a child safety seat inspection station or a certified child passenger safety technician near you. To find one, go to www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps and click on the Child Safety Seat Inspections button or call the DOT Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-DASH-2-DOT (1-888-327-4236.)

4 Steps for Kids

1. **REAR-FACING INFANT SEATS** in the back seat from birth to at least one year old and at least 20 pounds.
2. **FORWARD-FACING TODDLER SEATS** in the back seat from age one to about age four and 20 to 40 pounds.
3. **BOOSTER SEATS** in the back seat from about age four and 40 pounds to at least age eight, unless 4'9".
4. **SAFETY BELTS** at age eight or older or taller than 4'9". All children 12 and under should ride in the back seat.

