



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes National Child Passenger Safety Week

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National Child Passenger Safety Week September 18 through 24, 2011, The North Dakota Department of Health is reminding all parents and caregivers about the new child passenger safety recommendations that were released earlier this year.

The new recommendations, which come from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), encourage slowing the transition from one car seat type to the next. They emphasize there is a decrease in protection for each car seat transition step taken. For example, rear-facing car seats are safer than forward-facing car seats. This is because in a crash, the crash forces are distributed throughout the car seat shell of a rear-facing car seat, rather than on the baby's body. Placing a child forward facing puts crash forces directly on the baby's body through the harness system. That is why the AAP is now recommending caregivers keep their baby rear-facing until at least two years of age or until they outgrow the rear-facing weight limits of their seat.

“Because car seat companies are increasing the maximum weight limits for the harnesses on the seats, we are able to keep children in the harnesses longer,” said Dawn Mayer, Child Passenger Safety Program director. “Keeping children in their harnesses provides additional protection to children. Many people are eager to transition their children into booster seats and seat belts because they are ‘easier,’ but what they may not understand is that they are decreasing the safety for their child. That is why we are working to educate the public about this issue.”

Another important recommendation the AAP is promoting is keeping children in booster seats until they are at least 4'9" or until the seat belt fits correctly on the child's body (usually between 8 and 12 years old). In order for a seat belt to offer the correct protection, the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest. It should not lie on the stomach or across the neck.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

The North Dakota Department of Health and AAP recommend the following when transporting children:

- Children younger than 13 should ride in the back seat.
- **REAR-FACING**
Children should ride rear-facing until at least 2 years of age. Two types of car seats are available for rear-facing:
Infant Seats – Most of these seats can be used until 22-35 pounds. Use them until the highest weight limit or until the child’s head is within one inch of the top of the seat.
Convertible Seats – These seats can be used rear-facing and forward-facing. Most can be used rear-facing up to 30-40 pounds. Use them rear-facing until the highest weight or height limit allowed by the manufacturer.
- **FORWARD-FACING**
When children are at least 2 years of age or have outgrown the highest rear-facing limits of their car seat, they may ride forward-facing in a car seat with a harness. Use the seat until the child reaches the harness’s highest weight limit allowed by the manufacturer. Car seats with harnesses can be used up to 40-100 pounds.
- **BOOSTERS**
When children have outgrown the harness in their forward-facing car seat, they may be moved to a booster. The child should be at least 40 pounds and at least 4 years of age. Keep the child in the booster until about 4’9” tall or the seat belt fits correctly over the child’s body. Most boosters can be used up to 80-120 pounds.
- **SEAT BELT**
Children should use a seat belt when it fits over the body correctly. For a seat belt to fit properly, the lap belt must lie snugly across the upper thighs and be snug across the shoulder and chest. It should not lie on the stomach or across the neck.
- Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions when using a car seat!

Caregivers who need assistance with their car seats should contact a certified child passenger safety technician for help. To find a certified technician near you, call the North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536 or 800.472.2286 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/injury or the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.gov/.

For more information about child passenger safety, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536.

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