



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information, Contact:
Dawn Mayer
Division of Injury Prevention and Control
North Dakota Department of Health
Phone: 701.328.4533
E-mail: drmayer@nd.gov

North Dakota Observes Child Passenger Safety Month in February *State Health Department Reminds Public of the Importance of Transporting Children Safely*

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of Child Passenger Safety Month in February, The North Dakota Department of Health urges all parents and caregivers to buckle up their children on every trip to help ensure children establish a lifetime habit of buckling up.

Adults put good efforts into transporting babies and toddlers in car seats because it's the safe thing to do and because children are less capable of buckling themselves at this age. Observation surveys completed in North Dakota confirm this; 100 percent of infants and 88 percent of toddlers were observed being transported in a restraint. Unfortunately, as children get older those numbers decrease. North Dakota observation surveys indicate that only 83 percent of children ages 6 to 10 were riding in some type of restraint.

As children grow older and begin riding in booster seats and seat belts, often the responsibility of buckling up gets placed more on the child because they are able to do it themselves. This is often a time parents look forward to, as it is one less step to take when transporting children.

“What parents may not realize is they should take caution at this time and make sure that the child is properly buckled up,” said Dawn Mayer, Child Passenger Safety Program director. “This is a very important time for caregivers to instill safety into their child’s life. The habit of buckling up for life is established during this period of time for children.”

The Department of Health recommends adults follow these important steps:

- Children come in all sizes and need different forms of protection in a crash. When determining the best way to transport a child, follow the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s four steps to child passenger safety (see below).
- When a child transitions from a car seat to a booster seat (usually at 40 pounds and 4 years of age), make it a special event and show them how to place the seat belt safely over their body.

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600 E. Boulevard Ave. Dept. 301, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0200
Phone: 701.328.2372 Fax: 701.328.4727 E-mail: health@nd.gov

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

Explain that the seat belt is designed to go over their bones on their body because bones are the strongest points on their body.

- If your child uses a booster seat, make sure he or she uses it whenever they are in a vehicle, including with child care providers, grandparents, other parents, etc.
- Always make sure everyone is buckled up in your vehicle.
- Plan ahead – if you are car pooling, make sure every child has their own seat belt. If you don't have enough seat belts per child, add another vehicle. Don't take the risk of transporting a child without a seat belt.
- If someone else is transporting your child, don't assume they will be transported correctly. Talk to them about how you want your child transported to make sure your child is safe.
- Never minimize buckling up a child due to the distance traveled. Most crashes occur close to home (because we take those short trips more often) and a crash occurring at 25 to 30 miles per hour can create a dangerous impact, especially for those unrestrained.
- Children younger than 13 should ride in the back seat. Most crashes are frontal crashes and children should not ride in front of an airbag.
- The N.D. child passenger safety law states that children younger than 7 need to ride in a child restraint and children ages 7 to 17 need to ride in a restraint or seat belt. Be a good example and help children follow the law. Not buckling up a child is violating the law.

The Department of Health encourages parents and caregivers to follow “4 Steps for Kids,” a guideline for determining which restraint system is best suited to protect children based on age and size:

1. For the best possible protection, keep infants in the back seat in rear-facing child safety seats for as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds.
2. When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at least age 1 and at least 20 pounds), they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats in the back seat until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).
3. Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats in the back seat until the vehicle seat belts fit properly (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall).
4. When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4 feet 9 inches tall), they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).

Caregivers who need assistance 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 visit www.ndhealth.gov/injury or the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.gov/.

For more information about Child Passenger Safety Month, contact Dawn Mayer, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4536.

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