

Passenger Safety for Older Children

Information for parents, guardians, childcare providers

Wearing your seatbelt makes good sense when it comes to protecting passengers and drivers from the force of a crash. But it also happens to be the law. The good news is, most British Columbians are Clicking In, but they sometimes make common mistakes. Mistakes that can injure or kill. Here are some safety tips to ensure you are doing it up right.

The human crash

It all happens in less than two seconds. First there is the vehicle impact. It crashes, crushes and stops.



Then there's a second, more devastating crash — the human crash. On impact, occupants continue moving at the speed of the vehicle. Unbelted occupants will continue moving through the car until they smash into the interior, other occupants or go through the windshield.

The key to safety is correct use

- Wear the lap portion of a seatbelt snug and low over your pelvis. If left loose, it can ride up over your abdomen and cause severe internal injuries in the event of a crash. (Important: children should never use the adult seatbelt system until they've outgrown the booster seat — see following page).
- Wear the shoulder belt snug to your chest and adjust it to tighten as required. A loose shoulder belt can cause your head to strike the steering wheel or

dashboard if you crash. Or children could hit the console, back of a seat or even their own knees if the shoulder belt isn't snug.

- Never recline your seat to the point where the seatbelt is not snug to your chest as this may cause serious injury or even death. Seatbelts are designed to be used with a seat in the upright position. When the seat is reclined, the lap and shoulder belts are not snug against your body, causing them to be ineffective in the event of a crash. If a passenger wants to take a nap while travelling, don't be tempted to recline the seat; keep the seat upright even while sleeping.

Buckled up properly?

- Vehicle seat is in the upright position, not reclined.
- The lap belt fits snug and low across the hips.
- The shoulder belt is over the shoulder (not under the arm or behind the back) and across the chest.
- Shoulder belt is readjusted when it loosens.
- Seatbelt is worn underneath any heavy clothing, bulky winter jackets, etc., so it remains snug against the body.
- Booster seat is in place if the child is under 145 cm (4'9") in height and nine years old, or if the shoulder belt rubs across the neck or face.

Booster seats

When your child is between 4½ and nine years of age and under 145 cm (4'9") in height, a booster seat is the safest way for him/her to travel, because it lifts the child into position so the seatbelt (designed for adults) fits correctly and safely over the child's body.

On a small child, the adult lap belt rides up over the stomach (instead of the pelvic bones) and the shoulder belt cuts across the face or neck (instead of the shoulder and collarbone). In a crash, this could cause serious or even fatal injuries. At the point of impact, the seatbelt is locked in place restraining the child with considerable force at the vulnerable neck and stomach areas rather than the stronger bony areas of the pelvis and shoulders.

Use a booster seat in the back seat of the vehicle when a child is between 4½ to nine years of age and under 145 cm (4'9") in height. Make sure the lap and shoulder belts are used to secure the child in the booster seat. After a child reaches about nine years of age and 145 cm (4'9") in height, they should be big enough to fit in an adult seatbelt.

Think of booster seats as safety equipment for vehicles just as helmets and kneepads are safety equipment for sports time and other activities. Booster seats are for safety, but they also offer children better visibility and comfort during the drive.

Take the booster test

Can the child sit with his/her back straight against the vehicle seat-back cushion, with knees bent over the vehicle's seat edge without slouching? If not, then a booster seat must be used.

Remember, the back seat is the safe zone

Children younger than 12 years are best protected when they ride in the back seat of the vehicle and are properly buckled up. Riding in the back puts the child furthest

away from the point of a frontal crash and keeps them away from airbags. Airbags deploy at speeds up to 300 km/h and can cause serious injury if a child sits close to them.



If the back seat has side airbags make sure the child does not lean against them. Make sure the area in front of the airbag is free from toys, books, or anything else that could become a projectile if the airbag deploys.

For more information on ...

Child seats and clinics:

- Call the toll-free Child Seat Information line 1-877-247-5551
- Visit our website at www.icbc.com

Child seats, public notices and recalls:

- Call Transport Canada 1-800-333-0371
- Visit www.tc.gc.ca

Buying and installing a child seat:

- See ICBC's *Buying and installing a child seat* brochure.

Ages, weights, and heights given are guidelines. Always check manufacturer's instructions.

This publication reflects the laws in British Columbia as of February 2008. You should be aware that laws might change from time to time, so for a current statement of the law, you should refer to the applicable legislation. In the case of any conflict between this publication and the legislation, you should always follow the legislation.

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