

# Are You Pregnant? Buckling Up for Two

Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2024

## Protecting yourself protects your baby in a car crash.

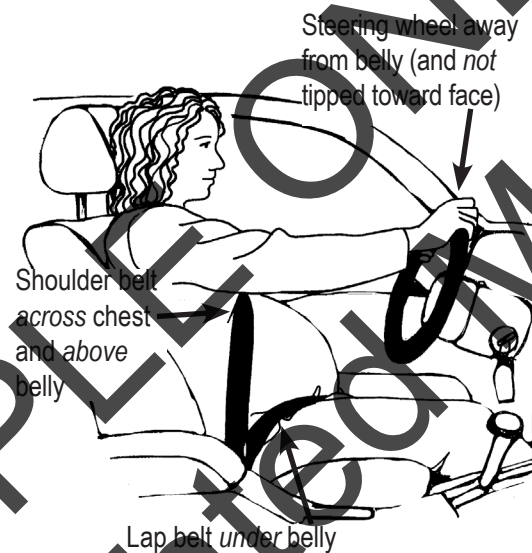
### The basics

- **Get checked by a doctor if you are in any crash.** Even in a minor crash, your unborn baby could be injured. This can happen even if you don't feel hurt.
- Wear a seat belt on every ride and in any seating position.
- Wear the seat belt correctly. (See the drawing.)
- Always use a lap-shoulder belt. It will protect you and baby much better than only a lap belt.
- An air bag will protect you and your unborn baby in a crash. Do not turn it off! Sit back, away from where the air bag comes out. Move your seat as far back as you can. *Always* wear a seat belt, even when there is an air bag.
- When driving, avoid letting your belly touch the steering wheel. If needed, tilt or shorten the steering wheel. It should go toward your chest, not your face.
- **Whenever possible:**
  - Let others do the driving.
  - Limit travel.
  - Plan rides to avoid darkness, bad weather, and other risky situations.

### A car crash is one of the most serious dangers to your unborn baby.

Car crashes kill or injure more unborn babies than babies in their first year of life. There are many things you can do to keep both of you safe.

### Always use a seat belt—even when you are pregnant



### Wear a seat belt the right way!

A seat belt should not cross your belly!

- **Keep the lap belt low.** Make sure it stays below your belly.
- **Place the shoulder belt across your chest,** above your belly. *Never* put it behind you, under your arm, or off your shoulder.
- **Make the belt snug.** Pull up on the shoulder belt to make the lap belt snug.
- **Wear the belt close to your body.** If wearing a coat, open it to your sides, out from under the belt. This helps the lap part of the belt stay low.

**Move the seat back as far as you can.**

**Use a lap and shoulder belt on every ride.**

### More ways to protect your unborn baby

**Drive less often, if you can.** Carpool to work so you are not behind the wheel. Plan your errands so you make fewer trips. Shop online. Ask people to come to you for visits. Go by air, not by car, if you must take a long trip.

**Avoid crash risks.** Try not to drive at night or in bad weather, when possible. Never drive when sleepy or using a cell phone. Never ride with a driver who is sleepy, distracted, or affected by alcohol or drugs.

**Use a safe car.** Make sure your car is in good condition. Check your vehicle tires, brakes, and lights often. If you are buying a car, choose one with good safety ratings and a roomy back seat for baby. Find crash ratings at [www.iihs.org](http://www.iihs.org) and [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov). Check cars for recalls at [www.checktoprotect.org](http://www.checktoprotect.org).

**See other side for tips on how to use a child car seat correctly.**

Make  
Every Ride  
A Safe Ride



## Basics of car safety for newborns

**Never ride with a baby in your arms.** It is impossible to safely hold a baby in a crash, even at low speed.

**Use a car safety seat (car seat) rear facing** as long as possible. This is the best way to protect baby's head and neck in a crash.

**Check your state law** to learn how children *must* ride. (See Resources.)

**Be sure the car seat is approved.** A label must say, "This child restraint system conforms to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards."

**Install baby's car seat in the back.** The back seat is safer for baby than the front seat. Use the center seat in the back if the car seat fits well there. If a baby *must* ride in the front seat, be sure the passenger air bag is off. (See the car owner's manual.)

**Always follow car seat instructions and the car owner's manual.**

**Make sure the seat belt or LATCH belt** holds baby's car seat tightly.

**Keep the car seat straps buckled and snug** over baby's body.

**Do not wrap baby in a blanket.** If a blanket is needed, put it over the straps *after* baby is buckled up properly.

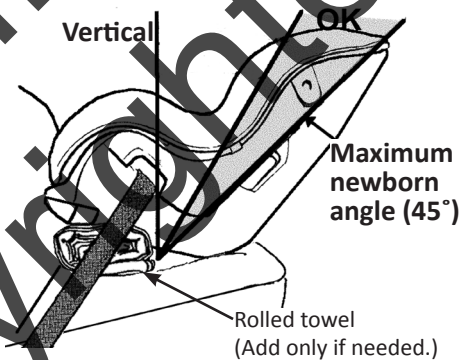
**Practice using your car seat** before baby is born. Your hospital or clinic may offer a car seat safety class.

## Find a car seat for baby

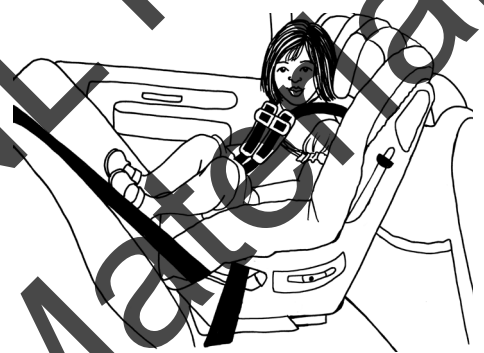
- A rear-facing-only car seat is small and must be used facing the rear of the car only. It has a handle for carrying outside the car. Most can be used with a base that stays in the car.
- A convertible car seat faces the rear for a baby up to 30 pounds or more. When baby is old enough, this type can be turned to face forward.
- Be sure the car seat's harness will fit baby snugly. The straps must go into the car seat at or below baby's shoulders. The lowest position for the straps should be less than 8 inches above the seat pad.

## Try the car seat in your car

Be sure it can be installed correctly in the back seat using the seat belt or LATCH belt. The car seat must recline properly in your car (as shown) and not move more than one inch when pushed/pulled near the belt. Follow the instructions for the car and car seat. See *Resources* to find help.



**Rear-facing-only seat**, for a child up to 22 to 35 pounds (check label).



**Convertible seat**, for a child up to 30 to 50 pounds when facing the rear (check label).

## Planning to use a second-hand car seat? Keep in mind:

- Newer seats are often easier to use and have better safety features.
- Do not use a car seat after its "do not use" date. If you cannot find this date, do not use the car seat if it was made more than six years ago.
- If the car seat has been in a crash, it should not be used again. If you don't know for sure, don't use it.
- If the manual is missing, contact the car seat maker to get a copy.
- Check for recalls at [www.NHTSA.gov](http://www.NHTSA.gov).

## Resources

**National Vehicle Safety Hotline:** 888-327-4236, 800-424-9153 (tty), or [www.NHTSA.gov](http://www.NHTSA.gov)

**Find someone to help:** 866-732-8243, [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org) (select Inspection under Installation Help) or [www.safekids.org/find-a-tech](http://www.safekids.org/find-a-tech)

**Child occupant laws:** Search "child law" at [www.ihs.org](http://www.ihs.org) or [www.ghsa.org](http://www.ghsa.org).

**Car Seat Basics training:** Free, one-hour e-learning; [www.carseateducation.org](http://www.carseateducation.org).

**American Academy of Pediatrics:** At [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org), select On The Go under Safety & Prevention.

**SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.:** 800-745-7233 or [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)

**Hudson Center for Prenatal Vehicle Safety:** <https://hcvps.org>

**PACK for baby's first ride.**

- ✓ Car seat
- ✓ Instructions for car seat and car
- ✓ Small baby clothes with legs
- ✓ Small blankets, in case you need them to pad around baby (but never under the harness)