



## When Children Die as the Result of Being a Passenger in a Car with Alcohol-Impaired Drivers

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Despite laws intended to eliminate driving while under the influence of alcohol or other impairing substances, it still happens. And children are often passengers in cars involved in alcohol-associated traffic crashes.

This week, *Pediatrics* is early releasing a Research Brief entitled, “Child Passenger Deaths in Traffic Crashes Involving Alcohol Impaired Drivers: 2011–2020,” by Kyran Quinlan, MD, Eduardo Romano, PhD, and Tara Kelley-Baker, PhD, from Rush University, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which analyzes 10 years of traffic fatality data to provide more details about pediatric deaths that occur in the setting of an alcohol-impaired driver ([10.1542/peds.2023-064159](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2023-064159)).

The authors found that, of the nearly 8000 children who died in motor vehicle crashes:

- 22% died in crashes that involved a driver who was alcohol impaired.
- Two-thirds of these children died while riding in the same car as the alcohol-impaired driver.
- The majority of these children were not restrained by a car safety seat or seat belt. As the driver’s blood alcohol level increased, the likelihood of the child being in an appropriate car restraint decreased.

It is clear that we need to do more to prevent these deaths. The authors offer suggestions for potential interventions that could decrease the number of these deaths. They also provide a warning that we may

start seeing similar trends with children who are passengers in cars driven by adults who have used cannabis products.

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