

Buckle, don't bundle children in car seats this winter

February 9, 2018

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Article type: [Parent Plus](#)

Topics: [Carseat Safety](#)

An icy and snowy winter can lead to slippery roads and car crashes. To keep children safe, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) urges families to buckle up young children in a car seat in the back seat. In addition, children should not be bundled up in bulky clothing because it can be hard to keep the car seat harness tight.

The AAP recommends that young children ride in a rear-facing car seat in the back seat until they reach the top weight and height recommended by the car seat manufacturer. Most children can remain in a rear-facing seat until age 2 or older, making it an easy rule that all drivers should follow, said Benjamin D. Hoffman, M.D., FAAP, an AAP injury prevention expert.



“Children are safer when they remain rear-facing as long as possible,” he said.

The reason for this is that young children carry more weight in the upper part of their bodies than adults. Their heads are large compared to their body size, their backbones are shallower and bones are connected more loosely. This raises their risk of getting a spine injury in a crash.

When a car comes to a sudden, violent stop, a rear-facing car seat will cradle a young child's entire back and spread out the force of the crash. This can help lower the chance that the child will have serious neck or spine injuries, Dr. Hoffman said.

The AAP also reminds parents to check that their children are buckled in tight in cold weather. Instead of bulky clothing like snowsuits or winter coats, parents should dress children in thin layers before buckling them in. It is difficult to secure the car seat harness over bulky clothes. If the harness is not tight enough, children can slip out of their seats in a crash.

A blanket or car seat cover can be used over the harness and child. A hat and mittens can provide added warmth.

More cold weather car seat tips are available on the AAP Healthy Children website, <http://bit.ly/2DrC2Wr>. For general car seat information, visit <http://bit.ly/2IzSyeL>. For help installing a car seat correctly, locate a car seat technician at <http://bit.ly/2B92Fzp> and <http://bit.ly/2hPrMCR>.

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