Keeping Children Safe in the Car

Pre-reading

Questions: How long do children need to use a car seat?
What percentage of parents do you think have car seats installed incorrectly?

Definitions: Restrain – to control or hold down
Lenient – easy, not strict
Criteria – the standard or rule

Reading

Did you know that car accidents are the leading cause of death for children? Car seat safety is very important. Well-intentioned parents, who desire to keep their children safe in the car, often make common mistakes that put their children at risk. Parents and caregivers can increase their children’s safety by using proper car seats in accordance with the age recommendations. Also, everyone needs to be sure that car seats are installed correctly.

Minnesota law requires that children under the age of 4 be restrained in a car seat. In addition, it is recommended that children under 80 pounds and under 4’9” use a booster seat. Minnesota has the most lenient age requirement law regarding car seat use when compared to all of its surrounding states. Many other states require the use of a car seat or booster seat until age 8.

Minnesota law also states that car seats must be the right kind for the size of the child. Children under age 1 and under 20 pounds must be in a rear facing car seat. Many parents make the mistake of thinking that their child can face forward if they are 1 year old or 20 pounds, but this is incorrect; the child must meet both criteria.

Once the child is forward facing, he or she should be in a car seat with a harness that is belted into the car using the car’s seatbelt (more recently, the “Latch” system can also be used if the car and the car seat both have it).

Children can move to a booster seat when they reach 40 pounds. In a booster seat, the child is belted in with the car’s seatbelt. The booster seat helps to make sure the vehicle’s seatbelt fits the child correctly. The booster seat should be used in the back seats of vehicles. Children should never be placed in the front seat until the age of 13. Even though air bags save lives, they can cause serious injury and even death to a child.

Proper installation of a car seat helps keep children safe. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, as many as 80 percent of all car seats are incorrectly installed and used. This is an alarming number. The confusing designs of many car seats are to blame. It is important to read the instruction book carefully to ensure that seats are installed correctly. Most communities offer free car seat installation checks by trained car seat inspectors. Contact your local police department to find out where to have car seats checked in your area.

Car seat safety is a must for the wellbeing of our children. By making sure the proper car seats are used and installed correctly, parents and caregivers can rest assured that their children are as safe as possible in their motor vehicles.

Source: www.carseatsmadesimple.com

Level 8.0
Understanding

1. Until what age should children use a car seat? ____________________________________________

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2. Why is car seat safety so important? _____________________________________________________

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3. What criteria must be met before a child may face forward in a car? _______________________

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4. Why should children never be placed in the front seat of a motor vehicle? _________________

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5. What are some common mistakes people make with car seats? _____________________________

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6. If a person has questions about proper car seat installation, what should he/she do? __________

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7. Why might car seats be installed incorrectly? _____________________________________________

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Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What new information did you learn about car seat safety? How might you use this information?

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