

FAQ's

Where can I get my child's car seat or other restraint inspected to make sure it's being used properly?

There are many nationally certified child passenger safety technicians throughout California. Check with your local Fire department or local CHP office to find a technician or "fitting station" near you. You can also go to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) website to find a fitting station. Below is a direct link to the City of San Bruno Fire Department website.

https://www.sanbruno.ca.gov/gov/city_departments/fire/_community_outreach/car_seats.htm

Do I need to replace my car seat after a crash?

If you have been involved in a crash and wonder whether you should replace your car seat, ask yourself the following questions:

Did the airbags deploy during the crash?

Was anyone taken to the hospital after the crash?

Is the car seat visibly damaged?

Were you unable to drive your vehicle away from the scene?

If you answered YES to any of the questions, you must replace your car seat.

How often should I buy new car seats?

There are a number of scenarios that require parents to buy a new car seat for their child, including:

As soon as their child reaches the height or weight limit specified on the car seat;

The car seat is past the expiration date;

The car seat has been recalled;

The car seat has been involved in a crash;

The car seat shows signs of wear and tear on the harness, padding, shell or frame; and

The car seat is missing parts of the seat or the owner's manual.

Do car seats expire?

Car seats expire usually between 6 and 10 years. Look for a label on the car seat or in the plastic shell that tells you the make, model, date of manufacture, and manufacturer information. Quick tip: Take a picture of the label with your phone and keep it handy.

Are used car seats okay?

Unless you are using a family member's car seat and you know its history (has it been in a crash?), buying a new car seat is best. This will ensure that you have a car seat that has the latest technology and all the parts, labels, and instructions that go with the car seat.

Be sure to register the seat, even if it is used, so you will be notified of recalls.

What car seat installation method should I use?

For many car seats, you have two choices when installing your car seat – Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) or using the vehicle's seat belt with the tether whenever possible. Both are equally safe when used correctly, and should never be used together, unless specified by the manufacturer.

With either installation method, it's important to remember the tether strap. This tether reduces forward movement of your child's head and neck in the event of a crash or sudden stop.

For peace of mind, have your installation checked by a professional.

How do I know if my car seat has been installed correctly?

Always start by following the car seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions when installing your seat. After you've installed the seat, we encourage parents to do the following tests:

First, there is the "inch test." Grab the car seat at the bottom where it attaches to the car seat and tug it from side to side and front to back. If the seat moves more than an inch in either direction, tighten it.

Once your child is buckled into the seat, there is the "pinch test". The "pinch test" is a quick, easy test to make sure the car seat straps are tight enough. Pinch the car seat strap near your child's shoulder; if you can pinch a wrinkle in the fabric, tighten the strap until it is snug.

How do I know if my child is ready to move from a booster seat to a seatbelt?

California law allows for a child 8 years of age or older to use a seat belt. However, it is safer for your child to remain in a booster seat until they can complete the 5-Step Test:

The 5-Step Test:

1. Does the child sit all the way back against the auto seat?
2. Do the child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
3. Does the belt cross the shoulder between the neck and arm, resting on the collarbone?
4. Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
5. Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?