

Child Passenger Safety - Questions and Answers

Car Seat, Booster Seat, and Seat Belt Use for Children – Updates to Key Safety Messages

In early 2017, the AHS Provincial Injury Prevention Steering Committee approved the [Recommendations for Car Seat, Booster Seat, and Seat Belt Use for Children](#). These recommendations address the safe transportation of children in passenger vehicles and are based on current evidence and best practice. AHS's key safety messages on child passenger safety were revised based on the approved recommendations. As a health care provider, you are an important source of health information for parents and caregivers of children of all ages. Use the following Q & A to learn about the new key safety messages, how to integrate them in your practice and how to access the updated resources on child passenger safety.

1. What are the key safety messages for parents/caregivers for car seat, booster seat, and seat belt use for children? What has changed?

The following chart outlines the updated key safety messages. These key messages address the seating location of children in the vehicle, as well as the use of rear-facing car seats, forward-facing car seats, booster seats and seat belts. The target audiences for the new key safety messages are parents/caregivers of children under 13 years of age.

Seating Location of Children in the Vehicle		
New Key Safety Message	Additional Information	Previous Wording
All children under the age of 13 are safest riding in the back seat.		Kids 12 and under are safest riding in the back seat.
Rear-facing Car Seats		
New Key Safety Messages	Additional Information	Previous Wording
<p>A child is safest in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least 2 years old or reach the maximum weight or height limit for the rear-facing seat (as stated by the manufacturer).</p> <p>Rear-facing car seats that have higher weight and height limits are preferred and will keep a child in the safer, rear-facing position beyond age 2.</p>	<p>A rear-facing seat provides the best protection for a child's head, neck and spine in a sudden stop or crash.</p> <p>When a child outgrows the rear-facing seat, they should move to a forward-facing car seat.</p>	<p>A baby should stay in the safer, rear-facing position as long as possible; until he/she is at least 1 year of age AND 22 lbs (10 kg) AND walking.</p>

Forward-facing Car Seats		
New Key Safety Messages	Additional Information	Previous Wording
<p>A child who is at least 2 years old or has reached the maximum weight or height limit of the rear-facing seat (as stated by the manufacturer) should ride in a forward-facing car seat.</p> <p>A child should stay in the forward-facing car seat until they reach the maximum weight or height limit of the seat (as stated by the manufacturer).</p>		<p>A child should be in a forward-facing child safety seat until he/she weighs at least 40 lbs (18 kg).</p> <p>Once a child reaches the top height or weight of the forward-facing seat, he/she will move to a booster seat.</p>
Booster Seats		
New Key Safety Messages	Additional Information	Previous Wording
<p>Once a child has reached the maximum forward-facing weight or height limit of their car seat (as stated by the manufacturer), they should move into a booster seat.</p> <p>A child is safest in a booster seat until they reach the maximum weight or height limit of the seat (as stated by the manufacturer).</p>	<p>A child is ready to ride in the vehicle without a booster seat when the vehicle seat belt fits properly. This is typically when a child is 145 cm (4'9") tall and between 8 and 12 years of age.</p>	<p>Use a booster seat until the child is at least 80 lbs. (36 kg) or 9 years of age or 4'9" (145 cm) tall.</p>
Seat Belts		
Key Safety Messages	Additional Information	Previous Wording
<p>A seat belt fits a child properly when</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are at least 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall. • Their knees bend comfortably at the edge of the seat when sitting all the way back. • The lap belt stays low and snug across the hip bones. • The shoulder belt crosses the chest and stays between the child's neck and shoulder. • They can sit like this for the whole trip without slouching. 		<p>No change to recommendation.</p>

Until a child can meet all 5 steps, they should continue to use a booster seat.		
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2. Have the child seat laws in Alberta changed as a result of these recommendations?

No. The child seat laws in Alberta have not changed. According to the law in Alberta, the driver must make sure passengers under 16 years of age are buckled up correctly. For children under 18 kg (40 lbs) or under 6 years of age the law says:

- an appropriate child safety seat must be used;
- the child safety seat must be correctly installed in the vehicle; and
- the child must be properly secured into the seat.

The new recommendations helps parents/caregivers comply with the legislation by guiding them on the use and installation of a car seat or booster seat that is appropriate for their child's age.

3. Are there resources available to support the new recommendations?

Yes. The [Rear-facing Car Seat YES Test](#), the [Forward-facing Car Seat YES Test](#) and the [Booster Seat YES Test](#) have all been revised to reflect the new key safety messages. The YES Tests provide information on the use, installation and harnessing of car seats and booster seats. Health care providers are encouraged to facilitate the use of the YES Tests by parents/caregivers. Parents/caregivers can use the YES Tests, in addition with the instructions that came with the car seat and the vehicle owner's manual, to check the use and installation of their car seat. The YES Tests do not replace the instructions that come with the car seat or the vehicle owner's manual.

4. How can information on child passenger safety and the YES Tests be accessed online?

The YES Tests and information on child passenger safety can be accessed through the following sites:

- MyHealth.Alberta.ca
- [AHS's Injury Prevention Program web page](#)
- Healthyparentshealthychildren.ca

5. Are the updated YES Tests available through DATA Group?

Yes. To order the YES Tests your facility will need a DATA Group account. For information on how to register for an account please contact DATA's AHS Help Desk for your zone at:

- ahscalgary@datacm.com or 403.207.6631 for Calgary, South and Central Zones
- ahsedmonton@datacm.com 780-577-8295 for Edmonton and North Zones

Users with a DATA Group account can order copies of each YES Test in one of three formats at a cost. The following chart outlines the DATA Group document numbers and prices for each available format.

Resource Name	DATA Group Document #	Ink	Paper Colour	DATA's Price (per package of 25)
Rear-facing Car Seat YES Test	104890A	Colour	White	\$9.12
	104890B	Black	Lilac	\$1.87
	104890C	Black	White	\$1.73
Preterm or Low Birth Weight Babies and Rear-facing Car Seats	104891A	Colour	White	\$5.29
	104891B	Black	Pink	\$1.37
	104891C	Black	White	\$1.23
Forward-facing Car Seat YES Test	104892A	Colour	White	\$9.12
	104892B	Black	Goldenrod	\$1.87
	104892C	Black	White	\$1.73
Booster Seat YES Test	104893A	Colour	White	\$9.12
	104893B	Black	Meadow Green	\$1.87
	104893C	Black	White	\$1.73

6. The age recommendation for rear-facing car seats has increased from 1 years of age to 2 years of age or until the child reaches the maximum weight or height limit of the rear-facing seat, as stated by the manufacturer. Why the change?

Evidence-informed child passenger safety finds that it is safest to keep a child in the rear-facing position until at least 2 years of age or until the child has reached the maximum weight or height limit of the car seat. There is agreement among leading injury prevention experts (Transport Canada, Parachute Canada, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Academy of Pediatrics) that the rear-facing position is safest. Due to developmental factors young children are at higher risk for head and spinal cord injury. The rear-facing position reduces this risk by providing the needed head and spine support for children. AHS recommendations for car seat, booster seat and seat belt use have been updated in order to align with the most current evidence for safe transportation for children.

7. How should the resources be used?

The AHS Provincial Injury Prevention Program recommends that the core competency for AHS staff involved in child passenger safety work is to be able to facilitate the use of the YES tests by parents and caregivers. Health care providers can facilitate the use of the YES Tests to deliver key safety messages in a number of ways:

- During PHN home visits and Well Child Clinic visits if parents have questions or concerns regarding the use of car seats and booster seats.
- When Health Promotion Facilitators are engaging parents/caregivers and community partners, particularly in rural areas, to build awareness and community capacity for child passenger safety and injury prevention.
- In pediatric clinical care settings and other service delivery areas involving young families.

Health care providers should consider the diversity of families and communities they serve to address barriers and improve uptake and proper use of car seats and booster seats.

8. Will there be additional resources and information available for health care providers and parents/caregivers?

The AHS Provincial Injury Prevention Program will work on opportunities and/or resources to help health care providers address barriers and questions they may face while sharing the recommendations and key safety messages with clients.

9. Will AHS's key safety messages on child passenger safety be updated in resources other than the YES Tests?

The AHS Provincial Injury Prevention Program will continue to update the current information on car seats with the new recommendations in all of its resources. If you have any questions about the recommendations or key safety messages please contact the Provincial Injury Prevention Program at injury.prevention@ahs.ca.