

Massachusetts Booster Seat FAQs

Why does my child need a booster seat?

- Beginning July 10, 2008 a child passenger restraint is required by law for children 5-7 years of age or until they reach 4'9" in height in the state of Massachusetts. This means that for children who have grown out of their forward facing child safety seat, the next step is the booster seat.
- A booster seat helps your child fit correctly in your vehicle's safety belt. It positions the lap belt on the hips and the shoulder belt across the chest, providing the greatest amount of protection.
- Motor vehicle crashes are the #1 killer of children between the ages of 4-8. Booster seats can reduce those injury rates by 58% over seat belt use for that age group.

What does the new booster seat law say?

- Its says that "no child under the age of eight and measuring less than fifty-seven inches shall ride as a passenger in a motor vehicle on any way unless such child is properly fastened and secured, according to the manufacturers' instructions, by a child passenger restraint".
- The previous law only required children under 5 years of age and under 40 pounds to ride in a child safety seat.
- The new law also states that children ages eight to twelve are required to wear a safety belt when traveling in a motor vehicle.
- To read the law visit <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/seslaw08/sl080079.htm>

When does the law go into effect?

- The law will go into effect on July 10, 2008.

What is the fine if my child is not riding in a booster seat?

- The driver can be stopped by the police and fined \$25.

How do I know when my child needs to move from a car seat to a booster seat?

- Children need to move from a child safety seat to a booster seat when they reach the weight limit on their forward facing child safety seat.
- Your forward facing child safety seat will have a sticker telling you its weight limit.

- If your child's ears are above the back of the child's safety seat and/or their shoulders are above the top strap slots they are ready to move from a child safety seat into a booster seat.

How do I put my child's booster seat in my vehicle?

- Booster seats are generally easy to use.
- Read your vehicle's owners manual and the booster seat installation manual for instructions.
- A certified Child Passenger Safety technician can check your child safety seat or booster seat for safety and assure proper fit. These checkpoints are free but usually require an appointment. To find a technician near you call the Car Safe Line at **1-800-CAR-SAFE (1-800-227-7233)** at the MA Department of Public Health or visit **mass.gov/childsafetyseats**

What is the best kind of booster seat to buy?

- The two most widely used booster seats are a "high back" or a "backless" booster seat. Both must be used with the vehicles lap/shoulder belt for proper positioning.
- No one booster seat is the "safest". Choose the seat that best fits your child and your car. Check the label on the booster seat for height and weight limits and then make sure it is used properly.

How much do booster seats cost?

- Prices range from \$15 up to \$150. Price is not necessarily a factor in the safety of the booster seat.

What if I can't afford a booster seat?

- For more information on where to get free or discounted booster seats call the Car Safe Line at **1-800-CAR-SAFE (1-800-227-7233)** or visit **mass.gov/childsafetyseats**

When can I take my child out of a booster seat and have them use a seat belt?

- When your child is at least 8 years old or 4'9" tall according to the new MA law
- To check the fit of your child's seat belt once they move out of their booster seat make sure that:

- *They are tall enough to sit without slouching, generally over 4'9" and 80 pounds
- *Their shoulder belt rests comfortably across the shoulder and chest, not on the neck or throat
- *Their lap belt fits securely, low and snug on hips
- *They can sit with their back and buttocks against the vehicle seat
- *Their knees completely bend over the edge of the vehicle seat

Massachusetts laws now require that:

- Infants and children must ride in a federally approved child passenger restraint until they are at least 5 years old and weigh more than 40 pounds.
- Children older than 5 and more than 40 pounds must ride in a booster seat until the child is 8 years old or is taller than 4 feet 9 inches.
- Anyone over the age of 8 must be protected by a safety belt.

Reminders:

- The safest place for any child, in any restraint system, is in the back seat.
- You are your child's most powerful role model so always wear your safety belt---and make sure everyone else in the car is buckled up---front seat and back!

Developed by the Injury Prevention and Control Program, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, April 2008