

Pediatricians Extend Rear-Facing Car Seat Recommendations

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have advised parents and guardians of infants and toddlers to use rear-facing car seats until the age of two. Recent studies have caused the AAP, the leading pediatric organization in the US, to alter their recommendations. The AAP has removed the age criteria and now advises parents to transport children in rear-facing seats until they reach the minimum size designated by their car seat. Each car seat is marked with these height and weight recommendations.

The Move Forward

Many parents move their children to forward-facing car seats long before it is safe to upgrade. Most car seats sold today are designed to hold children weighing up to 40 pounds. The average weight of a two-year-old in the United States is 26.5 pounds. The average child does not reach 40 pounds until four or even five. Although these guidelines may seem extreme, statistically a one- or two-year-old child's risk of severe injury in a front-facing car seat increases greatly. The wrong restraint system can increase the risk of injury by as much as 70%.

Rear-facing seats have been found to minimize impact in car accidents. Toddlers in front-facing car seats can be subject to airbag eruption and other flying debris. Current findings prove that rear-facing car seats carrying children that are properly restrained significantly reduce the risk of severe injury in an accident. The results also showed that minor injuries were minimized.

The Research

The AAP conducts research studies as part of their stated mission to, "attain optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults." Their findings confirm that the best way to protect infants, toddlers, and small children from serious injury in auto accidents is restraint in a rear-facing device, properly installed.

The AAP decision is based on their own findings and national accident statistics. Motor vehicles crashes have been the leading cause of death for children under four-years-old for many years. As many as four children under 14 die in car crashes every day. Severe injury and fatalities can be prevented by following these guidelines.

The Guidelines

Choose properly sized car seats.

- Face the seat to the rear, centered in the back seat when possible.
- Properly install the seat.
- Properly restrain the child.

Transporting children in car seats suited to their size and weight is essential to safe travel. Facing the car seat to the rear for as long as possible has proven the ultimate safety measure.

Travel safe, for everyone's sake.