

# Are You Pregnant? Buckling Up for Two

Child  
Safety  
Facts  
2013

## Protecting yourself protects your baby in a car crash.

### The basics

- **Get checked at a hospital emergency room if you are in any kind of crash.** Even in a minor crash, your unborn baby could be seriously injured. This can happen even if you don't feel hurt.
- Always use a lap-shoulder belt. It gives much more protection than a lap belt alone.
- Wear the seat belt correctly. (See the next column.)
- Sit as far back from the steering wheel as possible. Tilt it toward your chest, not up toward your face.
- An air bag will help you and your unborn baby in a crash. However, it is always best to sit far back from the steering wheel. The air bag is stored there.
- Let others do the driving in the last few months of pregnancy.
- Sit in the back seat whenever possible. The center of the back seat is safest—if it has a lap-shoulder belt.
- Travel as little as possible. (See the next column.)
- Make sure you ride only with a driver who has not been drinking or using drugs.
- Make sure the car is in good condition.

### A car crash is one of the biggest dangers facing your unborn baby.

Car crashes kill and injure more unborn babies than babies in their first year of life. There are many things you can do to keep both of you safe.

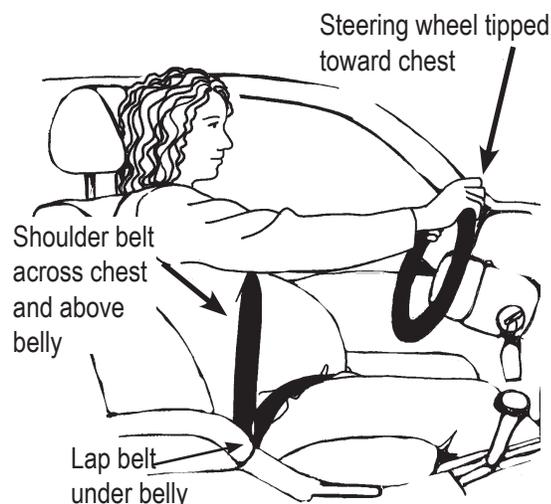
### The right way to use a seat belt while pregnant

Keep lap and shoulder belts snug. Pull up on the shoulder belt to tighten the lap belt.

Push the lap belt down as far as possible below your belly. Check to make sure it stays low.

Keep the shoulder belt across the middle of your shoulder. Never put it under your arm or off your shoulder. That is very dangerous.

If you are wearing a coat, open it and pull it out from under the belt and to the sides, away from your belly. This helps the lap part of the belt stay low.



*Move seat back as far as possible. Use both lap and shoulder belts on every ride.*

### Other ways to protect your unborn baby

**Drive less often, if you can.** Car pool to work so you are not behind the wheel. Plan your errands so you make fewer trips. Shop online. Ask people to come to you for visits. Go by air instead of by car if you must take a long trip.

**Avoid crash risks.** Avoid driving at night and in bad weather when possible. Avoid driving when sleepy or using a cell phone. Make sure any driver you ride with is not sleepy and has not been using alcohol or drugs.

**Use a safe car.** Make sure your car is in good condition. Check your vehicle tires, brakes, and lights often. If you are buying a car, choose one with a roomy back seat that has good safety ratings. (Find crash ratings by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety at [www.iihs.org](http://www.iihs.org).)

**Learn how to use a child car seat correctly.** See other side for tips.



## Basics of car safety for newborns

**Never carry a baby in your arms** in the car. It would be impossible to hold on to a baby in a crash.

**Use a car safety seat (car seat) rear facing** as long as possible, up to 24 months or more. This is safest. It protects a baby from head or spinal cord injury.

**Baby always rides in the back seat.** The back seat is much safer than the front seat. The center of the back seat is safest.

If there is no space for baby's seat in back, turn the passenger air bag off. (See the car owner's manual.)

**Make sure the seat belt or LATCH attachments** hold the car seat tightly. It should move less than one inch forward or side to side.

**Buckle and tighten the harness** snugly over your baby's body. Do not wrap baby in a blanket. Put a blanket over the harness *after* you buckle and tighten it.

**Always follow car seat instructions** and the car owner's manual to install and use the car seat correctly.

## Before birth

- Go to a car seat safety class. Call your hospital or clinic to find one.
- Practice installing the car seat and adjusting the straps. Get it checked by a trained Child Passenger Safety Technician. (See Resources.)

## Take to the hospital

- Small baby clothes with legs.
- Car seat with instructions for car seat and car.
- Receiving blankets for padding *around* (not *under*) the harness.
- A towel to roll and use under the car seat, if this is needed to make the car seat recline properly.

## Choosing a car seat

There are three kinds of car seats for newborns (pictures at right):

- Rear-facing-only car seat—small and must only be used facing the rear. You will need a convertible car seat later to keep your baby rear facing as long as possible.
- Convertible car seat—faces the rear for a baby up to 30 to 45 pounds. It can be turned to face forward for a heavier child. Do not use a style with the harness attached to a shield.
- Car bed—use only when a doctor says the baby must ride lying flat.

**Try the car seat in your car.** Make sure it can be installed tightly in the back seat using the seat belt or LATCH straps. If it does not fit, replace it.

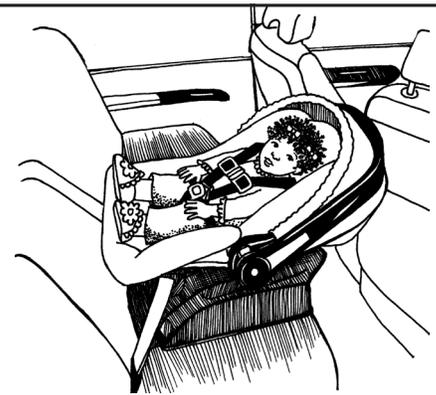
### Good features to get:

**Multiple harness positions.** Look for one with a lowest position less than 8 inches from the bottom of the seatpad. (See Resources.)

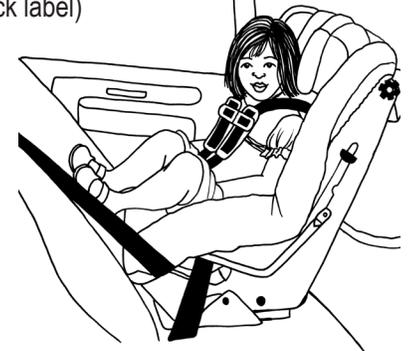
**A harness that is easy to use.** A pull strap in front is usually easiest.

### Tips for second-hand car seats:

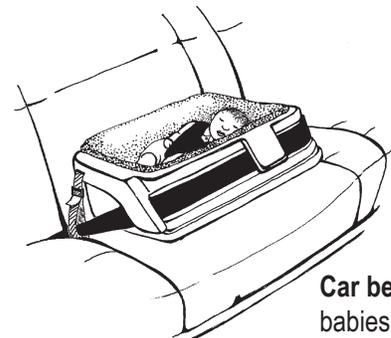
- Newer seats are easier to use and may have better safety features.
- Do not use a car seat if it is expired—usually when six years old. Most are marked with an expiration date.
- If the car seat has been in a crash, it should not be used again. If you don't know for sure, don't use it.
- Order missing parts and instructions from the car seat maker's website.



**Rear-facing-only seat** for babies up to 22 to 40 pounds (check label)



**Convertible seat** for children up to 30 to 45 lbs. facing the rear



**Car bed** for babies with medical needs

## Resources

### Videojug, "Car Safety and Pregnancy":

<http://www.videojug.com/interview/car-safety-and-pregnancy>

### SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.:

800-745-7233 or [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)

### National Auto Safety Hotline:

888-327-4236, 800-424-9153 (tty) or [www.safercar.gov](http://www.safercar.gov)

### Find a local Child Passenger Safety

**Inspection Location:** 866-732-8243 or [www.seatcheck.org](http://www.seatcheck.org)

### American Academy of Pediatrics:

[www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm)

### List of car seats for small babies:

[www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com)