



Child Car Seat Safety - Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can a child seat purchased in the United States be used in Canada?

All child seats for use in Canada must meet the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) set out in the [Motor Vehicle Restraint Systems and Booster Seat Safety Regulations](#). Child seats purchased in other countries, including the United States might not comply with these standards and are therefore illegal to use in Canada. An exception can be made for children with special needs who cannot be accommodated in standard CMVSS certified seats. Consult your child's physician or therapist. For more information visit: [Transportation for Children with Special Needs](#)

When purchasing a child seat for use in Canada, parents and caregivers should look for the National Safety Mark label attached to the seat, indicating that the seat complies with Canadian regulations and standards, and is therefore legal for use in Canada.

For more information visit:

[Child Car Seat Cross Border Shopping – what parents and caregivers should know](#)



2. Should a child seat be replaced after a crash?

Transport Canada recommends replacing a child seat that was involved a crash. The child seat could be damaged even if your child wasn't in the seat at the time of the crash. Most manufacturers also recommend replacing the child seat if it has been in a crash, whether it was occupied or not. Contact your child seat manufacturer to determine if you need to replace the child seat.

For more information visit:

[Transport Canada - When to Replace Your Child Car Seat or Booster Seat](#)

3. Can a child seat be recycled?

A child seat is mostly made of plastic and though some plastics can be recycled, what can and cannot be recycled changes often. Currently, child car seats are not included in a provincially regulated recycling program in BC. However, some municipalities have programs in place for recycling child car seats and some recycling companies accept child car seats – sometimes for a small fee.

To find out if there's a child car seat recycling program available through your municipality, call your city/town's waste management/engineering department.

To find out if there's a recycling option in your area contact the **Recycling Council of BC - 604-732-9253 or 1-800-667-4321**. Or check their website which has a searchable database by item (child seats are under Household Furniture) and location: www.rcbc.ca.



Private recycling options available include:

- **Gibsons**
[Gibsons Recycling](#)- Pho: 604-740-1425 - Cost: \$5 per seat. Open Mon-Sat (8am-5pm) and Sun (9am-5pm).
- **New Westminster**
[Queensborough Landing Return-it Depot](#) - Pho: 604-540-4467 - Cost: \$10 per seat. Open Mon-Sat (9am–6pm) and Sun (10am–4pm).
- **Surrey**
[TJs Kids/ATMO](#) - Cost: \$25 (child car seat) and \$10 (child booster seat).
- **North Vancouver**
[Waste Control Services](#) - Pho: 604-986-9777 - Cost: \$7 per seat. Open Mon-Sat (9am-3pm).
- **Vancouver**
[PMD Recycling Solutions](#) - Pho: (250) 893-3851 - See website for mobile locations on the 3rd Saturday of the month (9am-noon). Cost: \$12 if you fully dismantle it (fabric, metal, foam, and plastic separated) or \$20 if they dismantle it for you.
[TJs Kids/ATMO](#) - Cost: \$25 (child car seat) and \$10 (child booster seat).
- **Victoria**
[PMD Recycling Solutions](#) - Pho: (250) 893-3851 - See website for depot and mobile locations on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month (9am-noon). Cost: \$12 if you fully dismantle it (fabric, metal, foam, and plastic separated) or \$20 if they dismantle it for you.
[TJs Kids/ATMO](#) - Cost: \$25 (child car seat) and \$10 (child booster seat).
- **Kelowna**
[TJs Kids/ATMO](#) - Cost: \$25 (child car seat) and \$10 (child booster seat).

4. How can a child car seat be disposed of?

Child car seats can be disposed of in the garbage but check with your municipality's waste management if they can be collected curbside. When disposing of a child car seat it is recommended that you:

- Remove padding and cut it into two pieces
- Remove the harnessing and take off all the pieces
- Cut the harness so that it can't be used again
- Place the child seat plastic shell out separately from the padding and parts

5. In what situations can a child sit in the front seat of a vehicle?

The front seat of the vehicle is sometimes the only choice for transporting a child 12 years old or younger. This could be:

- When the vehicle has no back seat
- When there are younger children using all of the rear seating positions



- When the available rear seating position(s) only has a lap belt

There are some situations where a child cannot ride in the front seat no matter what the circumstance. These include:

- When the child is in a child restraint and:
 - The manufacturer instructions state that it cannot be installed in the front seat
 - When there is an active airbag that cannot be manually deactivated with a key or switch
 - The restraint is forward-facing and cannot be tethered
- When the child is using a booster seat and the manufacturer's instructions state it cannot be used in the front seat

If the only choice in a vehicle is the front passenger seat, and none of the above exclusions are a factor then it is recommended to:

- Move the vehicle seat as far back from the dash as possible with the shoulder belt still touching the chest
- Deactivate the airbag if possible. An airbag should always be considered to be active, even when the occupant restraint sensor may shut it off. Please note that the only way to deactivate an active airbag is with a key or switch, found on the dashboard of equipped vehicles.
- Make sure:
 - The child sits up straight against the back of the vehicle seat and they do not:
 - Lean forward at any time
 - Lean against the door
 - Put their feet up on the dash
 - Ensure that the seat belt is always over the child's shoulders and across their chest and never behind their back or under their arm
 - The lap portion of the seat belt is riding across their hips and not their stomach

According to Transport Canada, the back seat has always been safer, even before there were airbags - placing children in the back reduces the risk of death in a crash by 27%. For more information visit: [Reducing the Risk](#)

6. Where is the safest location to install a child seat in the vehicle?

Statistically, the center rear seating position is the safest. This is because:

- It's the farthest seating position from the point of impact in a frontal collision
- It can take advantage of a larger crush zone in a side impact collision
- There is less rotational force in a rollover collision

7. When installing a child seat, is the Universal Anchor System (UAS) safer than the seat belt?

Both the UAS and seat belt are safe methods of use. However, in many vehicles the UAS cannot be used in the rear center seating position whereas the seat belt can be used in any rear seating position as long as the child seat can be installed correctly.

There are also weight limits for using the UAS – usually up to 18kg (40lb) or 22.7kg (48lb) depending on the child seat and the vehicle. Some vehicle manufacturers provide a combined weight limit of the child and the car seat – refer to your vehicle owner's manual for more information. Once these weight limits have been achieved, the child seat must be installed with the seat belt. If the UAS or seat belt can be used, then it's just a preference. Some people find UAS easier, some do not.



8. Can a child car seat be installed using both the seatbelt and UAS?

This varies between vehicles and between child seats. You will need to refer to the vehicle owner's manual and child car seat instructions. If you cannot find complete instructions, and your child weighs 18kg (40lb) or more, Transport Canada recommends you install the child car seat using **both** the UAS (if equipped) and vehicle seat belt, **together with** the top tether anchor when your child seat is installed forward-facing.

For more information: [Transport Canada – It's Important to Properly Install Child Car Seats](#)

9. What position should the infant seat handle be in when in the vehicle?

Each infant seat is different. Refer to the labels on the infant seat or the manufacturer's instructions to see what position the handle should be in when the seat is installed in the vehicle.

10. Why should a child be kept rear facing?

It is the forces in a crash that cause injuries. When rear-facing, the forces of the crash are spread more evenly across and absorbed by, the back of the child seat. In a forward-facing position those same forces are taken up by the child's body. In addition, the movement of the neck is limited in a rear-facing position reducing the potential for neck injury. It's recommended that a child be kept rear-facing for as long as possible; until they've reached the upper weight limit for the rear-facing child seat. Check the child seat instructions for the rear-facing weight limit range.

11. When can a child go forward facing?

In BC, the law states that a child must be **at least 1 year and 10kg (22lb)** before they can go forward-facing. It also states that you must follow the manufacturer's instructions for the child car seat. At this time there are no child seats that can go forward-facing before one year of age and 10kg (22lb).

However, because rear-facing is the safest, it is recommended that you keep your child rear-facing until they have reached the upper rear-facing weight limit for the child seat. Some car seat manufacturers provide a minimum age limit for using a forward-facing car seat – always check your child seat manufacturer's instructions.

12. When can a child move to a booster seat?

According to BC laws, a child must be **at least 18kg (40lb)** before they can move to a booster seat. However, boosters have height restrictions as well so it's important to read the manufacturer's instructions to determine if a child can move into a booster seat. In addition, it is recommended that a child under 4 years old should not move into a booster. Also, a child must be developmentally ready to sit properly in a booster seat (e.g. the child keeps the seat belt in the correct position, the child doesn't try getting out of the seat).



13. When can a child move to the seat belt?

In BC, a child can move to the seat belt system once they are at least 9 years old or 145 cm (4'9") tall. However, the height is more important than the age for a child 9 years or older. If a child is less than 145 cm (4'9") it is recommended they stay in a booster seat. A child is tall enough to use the lap/shoulder belt without a booster when the child's back is against the vehicle seat back and:

- Their knees bend naturally over the front of the vehicle seat and their feet are flat on the floor
- The shoulder belt fits comfortably over the child's shoulder and across the chest
- The lap belt fits low over the child's hips

14. Can I wash the car seat cover?

You should always refer to the manufacturer's instructions before washing the car seat cover and/or harnesses. Some manufacturers may allow for the cover and harnesses to be machine washed, others only specify hand or spot washing. They should also be air dried and not put into the dryer.

**For more information, call the BCAA Child Passenger Safety Info Line at:
1-877-247-5551**