

Booster Seats: Boost until Big Enough

FACT SHEET

BC REGULATIONS

Since July 1 2008, it became mandatory for ALL children to be secured in a booster seat.

- ≈ 40 lbs – 80 lbs in weight;
- ≈ under 4 feet 9 inches in height (145cm); or
- ≈ 9 years old or younger

Children who reach the upper weight limit of the booster seat, but who are still under the age of 9 and under 145cm (4 feet 9 inches) in height, will need a booster seat with a higher weight limit.



A booster seat raises a child so that a vehicle seat belt fits properly. The lap and shoulder belt holds the child and the booster seat in place in case of a crash or sudden stop.

Why do children need to use booster seats?

While most parents acknowledge the necessity of car seats for babies, many are not aware of the need to properly restrain older children. Seat belts are designed for people who are at least **4 feet 9 inches** (145cm) tall.

In a crash, a proper fitting seat belt places pressure evenly across the shoulder, chest, and hip bones – the strongest parts of the body. When a child is too small for a seat belt, it tends to cross over the more vulnerable places of the body such as the neck and stomach. ‘Seat belt syndrome’ is how doctors describe injuries to the spine and internal organs – something that happens to children who were too small to use a regular seat belt.

What laws are currently in place across Canada?

Each province and territory has its own car and booster seat laws. Currently, Nova Scotia (2007), Ontario (2005), and Quebec (2002) have legislation requiring the use of booster seats. Booster seat laws will probably be slightly different from one jurisdiction to another, but all laws are working to protect children who have outgrown their car seats and who are too small to be properly protected by a seat belt alone.

What type of booster seats are available?

Approved booster seats have a **Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards Label**. Every brand of booster seat is a little different, However all new booster seats must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. Read and follow the directions that come with the booster seat.

There are four main types of booster seat costing an average of \$75. However, they also range from \$30 to \$200 depending on the model. These models include:

- High Back Booster Seat;
- 2 in 1 Convertible Seat and 3 in 1 Combination Seat (combination harness/booster seat);
- No Back Booster Seat; and
- Shield Booster Seat

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According to ICBC claims statistics, almost 860 children ages 4-9 are injured or killed in traffic crashes each year in British Columbia (ICBC, 2007)

Using a booster seat provides 60% more protection than seat belt use alone for children ages 4-9 (BCCA Traffic Safety Foundation, 2006).

Babies, toddlers, preschoolers are restrained in car seats. When they outgrow these – often between the ages of 4 and 5 year of age – they should be moved to booster seats.

Approximately 28% of Canadian children ages 4-9 regularly use booster seats (BCAA Traffic Safety Foundation, 2006).

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Remember

- Always follow the manufacturer's weight and height limits and instructions for installation.
- Install car and booster seats in the back seat of the vehicle, away from front seat air bags.

What type of booster seat is right for your child?

The most important thing is to make sure that the booster seat is suitable for your child and for your car (or cars if more than one vehicle is used). Look through the manufacturer's catalogues on websites or in shops to understand the difference between seat options. Try to find a retailer who will let you (or even better, help you) try the seat in your car before purchasing it.

Resources

- Safe Kids Canada. www.safekidscanada.ca
- Child Safety Link. www.childsafetylink.ca
- Transport Canada, Child Safety Vision. www.tc.gc.ca
- Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Safe and Secure. www.mto.gov.on.ca
- Insurance Corporation of British Columbia 2007, Child Seats. www.icbc.com