

Booster Seat Basics (taken from U.S. Department of Transportation)

What is a booster seat?

- A type of vehicle restraint that will lift a child up in order for the lap and shoulder belt to fit them properly across their shoulder, chest and hips. The booster seat sits independently in the vehicle, and the child sitting in it is held in place by the seat belt.

Who should use a booster seat?

- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a child is ready for a booster seat when they weigh approximately 40 pounds (when they have outgrown a toddler seat) and should use a booster seat until they are 4 feet, 9 inches tall.

Why is a booster seat important?

- When children under 4 feet, 9 inches use a seat belt alone, the lap belt fits too high (across the stomach) and the shoulder belt falls up across the neck. In the event of a crash, serious injury or death could occur.

How do you choose a booster seat?

- **Vehicle Fit:**
 - The booster seat always goes in the back seat where children age 12 and under should always sit.
 - High-back Boosters provide head support when vehicle seats have low backs or no head rests, but can also be used in vehicles with high head rests.
 - Backless Boosters should only be used when vehicles have a high head rest.
- **Child Fit:**
 - Check where the child's head rests. The ear level of the child's head should not be above the top of the vehicle seat back cushion or the back of a high-back booster seat.
- **Seat Belt Fit:**
 - Always use a booster seat with both the lap and shoulder belt – never with the lap belt only.
 - The lap belt should fit low and tight across the child's lap and upper thighs.
 - The shoulder belt should fit snug across the chest and shoulder and must never touch the neck.

When can a child start using just a seat belt?

- A child is ready for a seat belt alone when he/she is tall enough to sit with his/her back against the vehicle seat cushion, with knees bent over the seat edge and feet on the floor, without slouching. The required height for this position is about 4 feet, 9 inches.

For more information about booster seats, visit www.boosterseat.gov or call the NHTSA toll-free hotline at **1-888-327-4236**.

To better understand why booster seats are essential for children under the height of 4 feet, 9 inches -- think of the story of Goldilocks . . . a toddler seat is too small and a seat belt is too big, but a booster seat is just right!