

CHILD SAFETY BLOG

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Study supports mandatory booster seats in cars for children age 4-6

Many parents who want to ensure their young child's safety in a car put them in booster seats. A recent study conducted by the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics now confirms what these parents already suspected – namely, that using child safety seats can reduce injuries and deaths in an automobile crash. It also supports the introduction of upgraded child restraint laws for children older than 3.

The study is the first to look at injury rates before and after a state law on booster seats went into effect. In March 2005, the state of New York upgraded its child restraint law to apply to children age 4 to 6. Since the state already had a law mandating child restraints in cars for children age 3 and under,

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the study compared the percentage of new restraint users in the 4 to 6 group with those in the 3 and under group.

The study found that after the child restraint law was upgraded, the use of boosters increased from 29% to 50%, resulting in an 18% decrease in injuries to children age 4 to 6. Meanwhile, the rates of booster use and injuries in the group age 3 and under remained unchanged.

Child seat laws vary from state to state, though all states mandate restraints for children until they are 3. Child safety experts recommend that, regardless of state law, children under 57 inches (4'9") should ride in an appropriate restraint until the car's own seat belts fit safely and comfortably. They also recommend that children under 13 should always ride in the rear of the vehicle.

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