

# Child Passenger Safety

## A Fact Sheet on Preventing Child Passenger Related Injuries

Motor vehicle related injuries are the leading cause of injury death in Virginia and the United States.

### *Virginia 2006 Statistics*

- There were 910 motor vehicle traffic (MVT) deaths in 2006 accounting for over one-third(34%) of all unintentional injury related deaths.
- There were a total of 4,446 MVT injury hospitalizations in 2006.
- The median charge per episode of care was \$14,955, and the average length of stay was 4.9 days
- Over 891 million dollars were billed due to MVT hospitalizations.
- The most common injuries were fractures (70%) and internal organs (14%).

### *Child Passenger Safety Tips*

- Virginia law requires all children under the age of 8 to be properly secured in a child safety seat or booster seat.
- The safest child safety seat is one, which fits your child, fits your vehicle, and can be easily installed and used by the parent every time the child is transported.
- A child safety seat should be selected according to the child's age, weight, height, and behavior. Child safety seat weight and height guidelines vary and therefore the parent needs to read all of the seat recommendations prior to purchase.
- Second hand safety seats should be avoided due to the many risks associated with the unknown history of the seat. Seats may have broken or missing parts, missing instructions or could have been involved in a crash.
- Infants should ride rear-facing until they are at least one year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds. Never place a rear-facing safety seat in the front seat of vehicle equipped with a passenger-side air bag. Virginia law requires children in rear-facing child safety seats be in the backseat of the vehicle. There are exemptions for pick-up trucks and two seater vehicles.
- Children who are at least one year of age and weigh at least 20 pounds may be transported forward-facing in a safety seat. Children should remain in a safety seat with an internal harness until they reach the upper weight or height limits, according the seat harness guidelines.
- Children who weigh more than 40 pounds may use a belt positioning booster in a vehicle which has both a lap and shoulder belt or may remain in a safety seat which has an internal harness rated for use with higher weight guidelines.
- Children should remain in a restraint system until they can properly fit into the vehicle's safety belt system. The child must be able to sit with their bottom at the back of the vehicle seat; knees bent over the edge of the vehicle cushion without scooting forward, the lap portion of the safety belt positioned low on the hips at the thigh, and the shoulder portion of the safety belt positioned across the center of the chest and shoulder. Never allow a child to place the shoulder belt under their arm or behind their back.
- Children should ride in the back seat of the vehicle. With or without an air bag the back seat is the safest place for your child.
- Always refer to the safety seat instruction booklet and the vehicle owner's manual for correct installation and usage.
- Heavy clothing or wrapping children in blankets should be avoided; the harness webbing cannot be adjusted to a safe and snug fit with this excess material under the harness webbing.
- Children should never be left unattended in a vehicle; even for a few minutes.

**For More Information Contact:**

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1-800-732-8333, [www.safetysseatva.org](http://www.safetysseatva.org)

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