**Car Seat Laws**

Patient Information

Car seat information

By law, your child must use the child car seat for every single journey, no matter how short. Only EU-approved weight-based child car seats can be used in the UK. These have a label showing a capital ‘E’ in a circle and ‘ECE R44’.



**Which Car Seat?**

You may be able to choose from more than one type of seat in the group for your child. This will depend on their weight and the way they must be restrained in it. Do not buy or use a second-hand car seat unless you know its history.

Group Seats
0kg to 10kg 0 Lie-flat or ‘lateral’ baby carrier, rear-facing baby carrier, or rear-facing baby seat using a harness.

0kg to 13kg 0+ Rear-facing baby carrier or rear-facing baby seat using a harness.

9kg to 18kg 1 Rear- or forward-facing baby seat using a harness or safety shield.

15kg to 25kg 2 Rear- or forward-facing child car seat (high-backed booster seat or booster cushion) using a seat belt, harness, or safety shield.

22kg to 36kg 3 Rear- or forward-facing child car seat (high-backed booster seat or booster cushion) using a seat belt, harness, or safety shield.

Car Seat Safety

* Make sure the car seat is fitted securely, according to the manufacturer's instructions.
* Always travel with your baby in the back seat if you can.
* NEVER put a rearward-facing baby seat in the front if there is an active passenger airbag. It is illegal and dangerous to do so, because if the airbag goes off, it will hit the baby seat and fling it forward with considerable force.
* Children must normally use a car seat until they’re 12 years old or 135 centimetres tall, whichever comes first. Children over 12 or more than 135cm tall must wear a seat belt.
* You should choose a child car seat based on your child’s height or weight.

Seats with an integral harness

The top of the harness should be about 2cm below the shoulder of a child in a rear-facing car seat, and about 2cm above the shoulder of a child in a forward-facing car seat. It should be quite tight, so that only one or two fingers can fit between the child's chest and the harness.

Clothing can affect how snugly the harness fits, so check it every journey. The harness buckle should not rest over the child's tummy.

Most newborn car seats come with an insert for more support and padding. Do not buy separate inserts that do not come with the car seat, as these may not meet safety regulations.

Blankets & towels should not be placed under the baby to support them.

What should my baby wear?

Babies that get too hot are at a greater risk of sudden infant death syndrome. We advise removing any hats and outdoor clothing such as snowsuits and thick coats once your baby is in the car and placing a blanket over them and where needed dressed in a thin cardigan or jacket.

The best way to check your baby is getting too hot is to feel their tummy or back of their neck. If their skin feels clammy or sweaty, they are too hot, so remove a layer of clothing, as young babies cannot regulate their temperature.

**How long can they stay in the car seat for?**

Child car seats aren’t intended to be a place for babies to sleep when you’re not travelling, it is recommended to move them into a Moses basket or cot as soon as you can.

There is no published evidence which sets out how long babies should be kept in a car seat when travelling. However, infant healthcare professionals, safety experts and most car manufacturers recommend that babies should not be in a car seat for longer than two hours at a time. Ideally journeys should be kept short for the first few months. If possible, premature babies should only be in the car seat for 30 minutes.

Taking regular breaks will allow you to check on your baby, take them out of the car seat and let them stretch and move around. If your baby changes their position and slumps forward, then you should immediately stop, take them out of the car seat and reposition them before continuing your journey.

Ideally, a second adult should travel in the back of the car with your baby, or if travelling alone use a mirror to keep an eye on your baby. Recline the seat as much as possible when in the car (carefully following the manufacturer’s instructions).

Useful websites

* https://www.childcarseats.org.uk/ has more information about general car seat safety. They also have a freephone helpline, called Lifeline, 0808 801 0822, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm.
* https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/ has useful information on care safety & reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome.
* https://www.bliss.org.uk/ has information on traveling with sick & premature babies.
* https://www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules has information regarding babies & children & car seat laws.

**We ask for information about you so that you can receive proper care and treatment. This information remains confidential and is stored securely by the Trust in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018/GDPR. Further guidance can be found within our privacy notice found on our Trust website:** [**www.mkuh.nhs.uk**](http://www.mkuh.nhs.uk/)

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