11 ways to keep your child safer in a car.

Motor vehicle crashes claim the lives of more than 13 children per day. To best protect your child, choose a safety seat that fits your vehicle, fits your child, and that you will use correctly every time.

Always read the vehicle owner’s manual and the car seat instructions for correct installation information.

Check your vehicle owner’s manual and tags on the safety belts when you purchase a car seat. Make sure your child’s weight and height are within the limits of the car seat. If you buy a convertible seat, check the fit both rear- and forward-facing.

Do not buy a used seat unless you can verify 1) it has not been in a crash; 2) the age of the seat and that it has not expired; and 3) it has not been recalled.

Infants and toddlers need to ride in rear-facing car seats as long as possible. Keep children rear-facing until they reach their car seat’s height or weight limits. Most convertible seats have limits that will allow a child to ride rear-facing for two years or more.*

When your child outgrows the rear-facing seat, he/she should ride in a forward-facing convertible or combination seat with a harness and tether as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed in the car seat manufacturer’s instructions.

Use the top tether strap if your car seat and vehicle manufacturer’s instructions allow it. When snug, the top tether will reduce the distance your child’s head travels in a crash.

A child who exceeds the limits of a forward-facing car seat with the harness is safest in a booster until the adult seat belts fit correctly, usually between 8-12 years old.

Install the seat in back; all children should ride in the back seat until they are at least 13 years old. Never install a car seat in front of an air bag.

Install your car seat snugly. To check, grasp the seat at the bottom near the belt or the LATCH attachment points. The seat should move less than an inch side-to-side or toward the front of the vehicle.

Attend a car seat checkup to be sure the seat is installed correctly and your child is safely secured. To learn more about car seat checks near you, visit www.safekids.org/events.

Your kids are watching what you do! Make sure you buckle up and stay off your cell phone while driving.

* AAP Policy Statement, August 2018