

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do booster seats matter?

Seat belts are designed for adults, not for kids. Lap and shoulder belts minimize risk of injury and death by holding you into the car and spreading the energy of a crash over the strongest parts of the skeleton. Because seat belts do not fit well on many children, they can distribute crash forces over soft tissue, rather than bone, which can result in injuries to internal organs and spines. Depending on the age and size of the child, car seats or booster seats provide the best protection for young occupants and do the job of holding children securely in a vehicle and managing deceleration forces.

Where did this 8 year/4'9" figure come from?

Children are ready for lap and shoulder belts alone when they can place their backs firmly against the vehicle seat back with their knees bent comfortably over the vehicle seat cushion. Lap belts should fit low and snug on the upper thighs and shoulder belts should rest over the shoulder and across the chest. For most children, that good fit is achieved by the time a child is 8 years old, or earlier if the child has reached 4'9".

Are some kinds of booster seats better than others?

Booster seats come in high-back and backless styles. The purpose of high-back boosters is to provide adequate whiplash protection for children in seating positions without a headrest. If you have an older child who balks at using a booster seat or worries about what her friends might say, a backless booster can be a nice compromise, since it isn't obvious to those outside the vehicle.

Do I need to carry my child's birth certificate or other proof of age with me?

No. The purpose of the booster seat provision isn't to make life difficult for parents, it's to protect children. Police officers are primarily concerned with protecting children who are obviously at risk, not stopping drivers just to check on children's age or height.

Where can I get more information on Ohio's law or how to best protect my child passengers?

Contact the Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital Injury Prevention Center's Child Passenger Safety Hotline at 216-844-2277 and choose option #5 to leave a message with your phone number and your question or concern. Your call will be returned by one of Rainbow's nationally certified child passenger safety technicians.

