

<http://www.ydr.com/story/news/education/2016/08/12/new-child-car-seat-law-takes-effect/88526906/>

The screenshot shows the top of a news article on the website ydr.com. The navigation bar includes links for HOME, NEWS, SPORTS, BUSINESS, ENTERTAINMENT, LIFESTYLE, OPINION, OBITUARIES, ELECTIONS 2016, RETRO YORK, USA TODAY, and MORE. A search bar is located on the right. The article title is "Here's how new law affects your child in the car". Below the title is a photograph of a woman, Angie Mason, holding a young child. To the left of the photo are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Below the photo is a caption: "One mom agrees with a law keeping kids in rear-facing seats longer. Angie Mason".

Here's how new law affects your child in the car

Angie Mason, amason@ydr.com 2:28 p.m. EDT August 14, 2016

Suzanne Burt's 9-year-old daughter sat in a car seat facing backward until she was 1. It was a best practice then, but times have changed and so has the law.

Burt's son, Charlie, is 15 months old, and she plans to keep his car seat facing backwards until he's at least 2 years old, something that's now required by law.

Law or no law, research shows that's the safest thing for kids, Burt said. It's not worth turning Charlie around sooner just so he doesn't have to bend his legs.

"Even if you're the safest driver in the world, it just takes one person ... to ram into you," said Burt, of Spring Garden Township.

On Friday, a new law took effect in Pennsylvania that requires children younger than 2 to be in rear-facing car seats until they max out the weight and height limits designated by the manufacturer.

A few years ago, the American Academy of Pediatrics updated guidance on child car seats, recommending that children remain rear-facing until age 2 or until they hit the maximum limits of the seat. Pennsylvania is the fourth state to require it. The first year, violators will get a warning and after that, there's a \$125 fine.

Research has shown that children ages 1 to 2 are five times less likely to be injured in a crash if they are rear facing, said Allyson Fulton, consultant for Safe Kids PA. At that age, a child's head is disproportionately large, and if they are forward facing, a crash would put much more stress on the spinal column.

"If that child remains rear facing ... it helps to protect the child's head, neck and spine because of the way they are more reclined in the seat, and it kind of absorbs those crash forces," she said.

Barbara Zortman, director of the York County Center for Traffic Safety, said some people were in too much of a rush to turn kids, even petite ones, around.

Most crashes are front-end collisions, she said, and young bodies are not meant to sustain that force. Where an adult might suffer whiplash, a young child could suffer a much worse injury, Zortman said.

Several local parents say they have no problem with the requirement; some even plan to keep their kids rear-facing longer than age 2. But some say that rear-facing car seats also pose some logistical challenges when kids get bigger and their legs get longer.

Fulton hears that a lot and often says that it's easier to fix a broken leg than an injury to the head, neck or spine. Still, no research has shown that being rear-facing causes more leg injuries, she said. Kids are flexible and can find comfortable positions, whether they want to put their feet on the seat, cross their legs or bend at the knees.

"It bothers the parents more so usually than the child," she said.

But it's not always easy.

Kim Albert, of Seven Valleys, turned her son's car seat to face forward when he was 22 months old, and he'll turn 2 in a couple of days.

She's not sure why, but it had just become a struggle to get Max in his seat when he faced backward. He twisted and screamed. It was a battle to get him seated.

Forward facing, he's happy. She thinks he might like sitting upright better. He's a big kid, and she wasn't concerned that he was going to be that much more mature if she waited two months.

Albert considers herself a very careful parent, always trying to follow the best practices for safety. But sometimes there's just a fine line, and parents should be able to do what they think is right, she said.

"I think most parents are doing the best they can to keep their kids happy and healthy," she said.

Resources

Safe Kids York County will hold a free car seat check event from 10 a.m. to noon Aug. 15 at WellSpan York Pediatric Medicine, 2050 S. Queen St., York Township.

At the event, nationally certified technicians will help properly install car seats or boosters and answer questions about the new Pennsylvania law on rear-facing car seats. No appointments are necessary.

Call 1-888-232-7233 for information about other car seat check sites.

Visit safecar.gov to find information about choosing a car seat, finding a car seat inspection station and more.