

The Patriot-News express

monday 03.28.11



Breezy,
sunny

46° 24°



MORE IN
YOUR LIFE

NEW VIEW ON SAFETY

1 Parents should keep toddlers in rear-facing car seats until age 2 or until they reach the maximum height and weight for the car seat. Allyson Fulton, child safety coordinator with Safe Kids Pennsylvania, said doing so provides support to the head, neck and spine in the event of a crash.

Many parents look forward to switching their kids into front-facing car seats after their first birthday. But the American Academy of Pediatrics says that's too soon. Kids look forward to getting out of booster seats after their eighth birthday. But that also isn't in the best interest of the child, the group contends.

So how can parents best protect their kids? Here are new guidelines.

2 Children 2 or older, or those who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for the car seat, should use forward-facing car seats with a harness. Children should remain in that car seat until they reach the maximum height and weight allowed by the manufacturer.

3 Children who exceed the limits of a front-facing car seat should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat. They should use a booster until they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall. They should use the booster seat from age 8 to 12. Fulton noted that the new guidelines are recommendations. Parents cannot be cited by local law enforcement for noncompliance.

3 PAGES OF JOBS & CLASSIFIEDS START ON PAGE B7

Questioning the new car seat guidelines?

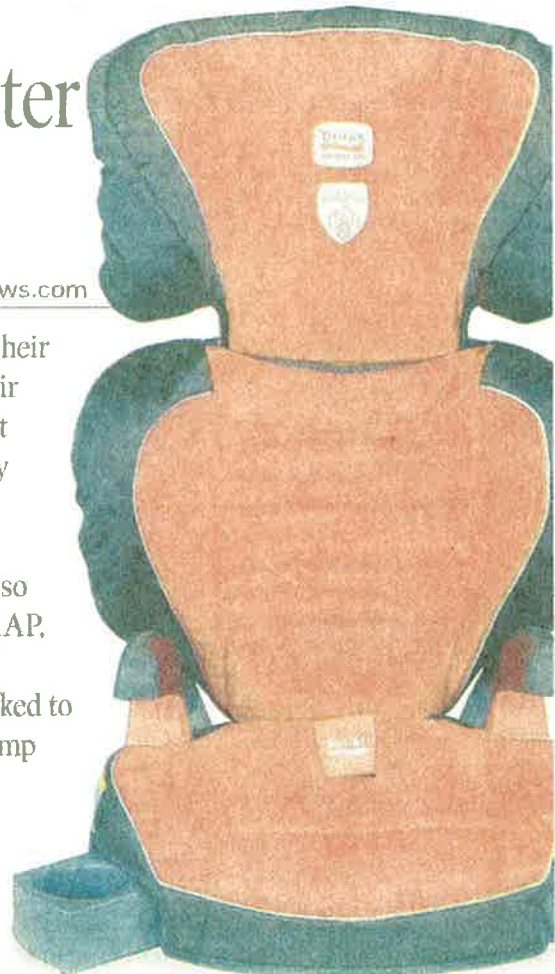
Understand them better with this breakdown

BY STEPHANIE RAPOSO • sraposo@patriot-news.com

Many parents look forward to switching their kids into front-facing car seats after their first birthday, but according to the latest guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, that's too soon.

Kids, meanwhile, look forward to getting out of booster seats after their eighth birthday. But that also isn't in the best interest of the child, according to AAP, the nation's largest group of pediatricians.

So how can parents best protect their kids? We talked to Allyson Fulton, child safety coordinator with the Camp Hill-based Safe Kids Pennsylvania, which endorses the new guidelines. She helped provide the following breakdown of the AAP updates released last week, state guidelines and other tips to keep children safe.



>> What are the new AAP child car safety guidelines?

1. Parents should keep toddlers in rear-facing car seats until the age of 2 or until they reach the maximum height and weight for the car seat.

Fulton said doing so provides support to the head, neck and spine in the event of a crash.

The previous AAP policy from 2002 suggested parents wait until their child is at least 12 months and 20 pounds before making the switch to front-facing car seats.

2. Children 2 or older, or those younger than 2 who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for the car seat, should use forward-facing car seats with a harness.

Children should remain in that car seat until they reach the maximum height and weight allowed by the manufacturer.

According to the AAP, a front-facing car seat with a harness is safer than a booster seat for older children.

3. Children who exceed the limits of a front-facing car seat should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat. They should use a booster until they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall. They should be 8 to 12 years old while using the booster seat.

Fulton said that ultimately it is the parent's decision whether or not to take the booster away after the child's 13th birthday if they have not reached the average adult height.

Her advice is to keep using it, regardless of age, until they are at least 4 feet 9 inches.



WOULD YOUR CHILD MEET THE NEW HEIGHT GUIDELINES?

The American Academy of Pediatrics says children should use a booster seat until they are at least 4 feet 9 inches tall — that includes kids 8-12 years old.

>> Are there penalties if parents do not adhere to the suggestions?

Fulton said these are just recommendations from the AAP. Parents cannot be cited by local law enforcement if they do not comply with these guidelines.

>> How do these car safety guidelines apply to adults under 4 feet 9 inches?

Fulton said adults under the average adult height should contact the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for guidelines and safety tips. The AAP's recommendations only apply to child safety.

>> What does Pennsylvania law say about child car safety?

From birth to age 4, all drivers are responsible for securing children in a federally approved restraint system, said Dauphin County First Assistant District Attorney Fran Chardo. Also keep in mind that if a car seat is on the market, it has been federally approved.

Children ages 5-7 must ride in a federally approved child booster seat. The exception to this rule is if the child reaches 4 feet 9 inches before their 8th birthday.

>> How do I make sure my kids are strapped in safely?

Have a child safety expert make sure you're strapping your kids safely in your vehicle and that your car seat is securely strapped to the car. Find one in your area by visiting www.pasafe.kids.org.

INSIDE: Other car safety hazards to watch for **Page B2**

Follow these tips to keep children safe in the car

BY STEPHANIE RAPOSO
sraposo@patriot-news.com

There are steps parents can take to better ensure a child's safety while riding in a car. They include:

- Strap in booster seats that are not in use, even when a child is not in the vehicle. Drivers need to be protected, too, and a loose booster seat can strike someone during a crash.
- Avoid buying used car seats. The average expiration date for a child car seat is six years. If a used car seat is bought, it should only be done if there is proof of when it was purchased. It is also critical to check with the manufacturer to make sure the product was not recalled, said Allyson Fulton, child safety coordinator with the Camp Hill-based Safe Kids

Pennsylvania.

- Don't allow children under 13 to ride in the front seat. The safest place for any passenger is the back seat.
- Remove objects that can move around and strike a child during an accident. This includes tissue boxes on the back dashboard, mirrors that parents use to watch a child in a rear-facing car seat and sun shades that cover the back seat window. Items sitting on the floor of the vehicle, like an umbrella, also can fly up and hit the child in an accident, Fulton said.

DEADLY NUMBERS

- While the rate of deaths in motor vehicle crashes for those under age 16 has decreased significantly (dropping 45 percent between

1997 and 2009), it still is the leading cause of death for children ages 4 and older.

- Children under age 2 are 75 percent less likely to suffer severe or fatal injuries in a crash if they are facing the rear of the car.
- Child safety seats reduce the risk of death in passenger cars by 71 percent for infants and by 54 percent for toddlers.
- Counting children and teens until the age of 21, there are more than 5,000 deaths each year.
- For every fatality, about 18 children are hospitalized and more than 400 are injured seriously enough to need medical treatment.

Source: The American Academy of Pediatrics, Safe Kids Pennsylvania