

Booster Seats: The New Law

Did you know that car accidents are the number one cause of fatalities of children between the ages of 4 and 7? The correct child restraint device dramatically reduces the risk of injury and death in a collision. Without a booster seat, a child can suffer serious internal and/or spinal injuries in a crash if the seat belt rides up onto the soft stomach area instead of staying on the hip and thigh bones. Due to improper fit of the lap and shoulder positions of an adult seatbelt, kids between the ages of 3 and 9 are at the greatest risk for seat belt syndrome. Seat belt syndrome is a pattern of an intra-abdominal and spinal injuries caused by the improper fit of seat belts. Unfortunately, too many parents allow their children to use lap-and-shoulder belts with no booster seat before the children are ready.

In August 2009, New York State amended vehicle and traffic law Section 1229-c requiring that all children under 8 years of age (previously age 7) use an appropriate child safety seat, which includes a booster seat. However, this is a minimum requirement and many children are much better off using a booster seat even after they turn 8. According to pediatric experts, children should use a booster seat until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall, which most children don't reach until they are 10 or 11 years of age.

The booster seat helps to assure that the seat belt properly passes across the child's chest, not the neck or throat. It also aids in the lap belt fitting across the child's hips, not the stomach or abdomen. Younger children should not graduate from a safety seat to a

booster seat until their ears reach the top of the safety seat's back or their shoulders go above the slots for the harness straps or they exceed the weight recommended by the seat manufacturer (typically 40 pounds).

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