



Occupant Safety

A leading cause of death in the United States is traffic crashes, and many of these deaths can be prevented if the all occupants of a vehicle simply buckle up. Regardless of age, every person needs to be properly buckled up when in a motor vehicle.

Young Children

- The Child Passenger Protection Act requires that all children under age 8 be properly secured in an appropriate child safety restraint system. Keep children in the back seat at least through age 12.
 - **Newborn-Age 2:** Children under 2 must be properly secured in a rear-facing child restraint system unless they weigh more than 40 pounds or are more than 40 inches tall.
 - **Ages 2-4:** Children should remain in a rear-facing safety seat for as long as possible, or until they are at the upper height or weight limit of the seat. When a child out-grows a rear-facing safety seat, he or she may transition to a forward-facing seat with a harness system.
 - **Ages 4-8:** Children should be secured in a forward-facing safety seat with an internal harness system until they reach the upper height or weight limit allowed by the car seat manufacturer. When a child outgrows the forward-facing seat, he or she may transition to a belt-positioning booster seat.
 - **Ages 8-12:** Children should stay in a belt-positioning booster seat until they are tall enough to properly fit in an adult lap/shoulder belt.

[Find more child passenger safety requirements information on the Illinois Secretary of State's website.](#) [Additional information can also be found on the Illinois Department of Transportation's website.](#)

Teens/Adults

- Every driver and passenger of a motor vehicle operated on a street or highway is required to wear a properly adjusted and fastened seat safety belt. They need to be worn all the time, not just on long trips!
 - A shoulder harness is worn across the shoulder and chest with minimal, if any slack. The shoulder harness should not be worn under the arm or behind the back, as this could cause serious internal injuries in a crash.

- The lap belt should be adjusted so that it is snug and lies low across your hips after fastening. If you have an automatic shoulder belt, be sure to buckle your lap belt as well. Otherwise, in a collision you could slide out of the belt and be hurt or killed.
 - You should be seated upright with your back against the seat and feet on the floor. Improper seating positions, such as slouching or resting one's feet on the dashboard can result in reduced effectiveness of the vehicle's restraint system and possibly result in injury.
 - Seat belts should be worn even if the vehicle is equipped with air bags. While air bags are good protection against hitting the steering wheel, dashboard or windshield, they do not protect you if you are hit from the side or rear or if the vehicle rolls over. In addition, an air bag will not keep you behind the wheel in these situations.
([See the source information](#))
- If you're pregnant, make sure you know how to position your seat and wear a seat belt to maximize your safety and the safety of your unborn child. [Click here to see NHTSA's instructional diagram](#) of recommendations for pregnant drivers and passengers.