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FAMILY PHYSICIANS URGE YOU TO BUCKLE UP

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Car safety is of the most important issues for parents to be aware of when driving with a small child. Each year in the United States, approximately 600 children under age 5 die in car crashes.

Follow the guideline set forth by the U.S. Department of Transportation and Highway Safety Research Center for the correct way to install a child safety seat.

Providing maximum protection to a child in a motor vehicle involves three-steps:

- The restraint used must be right for the size and age of the child.
- The child must be correctly harnessed into the restraint.
- The restraint must be installed tightly and correctly in the appropriate location.

Experts on child passenger safety maintain that one of the most important things that parents can do is read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for the child safety seat and seek assistance if the instructions are confusing or if installation is too difficult.

Experts agree that parents move their child into an adult seat belt before they are ready. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that children not be placed in an adult seat belt until they weigh 80 pounds and are about 4'9" tall.

The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.

FACT SHEET

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Child Passenger Safety Seat Guidelines and Tips

- **Infants, from birth to age one, and at least 20 pounds should ride in the back seat in a rear facing safety seat.** Harness straps should be at or below the infant's shoulders and should fit snugly. The harness chest clip should be placed at the infant's armpit level.
- **Children over one year and at least 20 pounds may ride forward facing in the back seat. Children should ride in a safety seat with full harness until they weigh about 40 pounds.** In most cases, harness straps should be at or above the child's shoulders, snug, and threaded through the top slots. Harness chest clips should be at the child's armpit level.
- **Children between 40 and 80 pounds should ride in the back seat in a belt-positioning booster seat, which uses the adult lap and shoulder belt. Booster seats should be used until the adult lap and shoulder belt fit children properly.** The shoulder belt should be snug against the child's chest, resting across the collarbone. The lap belt should lay low across the child's upper thigh area. Booster seats should be used until the child can sit with his/her back against the vehicle seat back cushion, knees bent over the seat cushion edge, and feet on the floor, approximately 4'9".

Installation Tips

- Do not install a rear-facing restraint in front of an active air bag.
- Install child restraints in the center, rear seat whenever possible.
- Place infants under 20 pounds or less than one year in a semi-reclined, rear-facing restraint.
- Route the vehicle seat belt correctly through or around the restraint according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Tighten the seat belt around the restraint. To check, hold the shell of the restraint where the seat belt goes through and pull toward the front of the car and side-to-side. There should be no more than one inch of movement in either direction.
- Lock the seat belt. Locking clips are needed on some seat belts. Check the vehicle owner's manual.
- Install and use a tether strap whenever possible. Top tethers can make most front-facing restraints work better.