

Car Safety.

Hilliard Pediatrics, Inc. – Dr. Tim Teller, M.D. – 7/14

It is a common question for us to be asked: what is the law in Ohio about car safety? And are the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations the same or different? As of June 2012, the following are the current Ohio laws (www.dmv.org/oh-ohio/safety-laws.php) and the current AAP recommendations (www.healthychildren.org => Safety & Prevention => On The Go). Realize the AAP recommendations are more conservative, safety wise.

Ohio law says:

- if your child is under 1 year of age and under 20 pounds, they must be in a rear-facing child seat.
- if your child is at least 1 and weighs more than 20 pounds, they can ride in a forward-facing seat until they grow out of that seat.
- if your child weighs over 40 pounds, they must ride in a booster seat.
- your child must use the booster until he is 8 years old or at least 4'9" (57").
- children under 12 years of age should ride in the backseat to prevent airbag injuries and fatalities.
- drivers and front-seat passengers must wear a seat belt, even if air bags are available.

The AAP recommends:

- all infants and toddlers should ride in **rear-facing car seats** until they are **2 years of age** or until they reach the highest weight or height by their car safety seat's manufacturer.

We are commonly asked this question, so here is the question and answer directly from the AAP website:

“Q: What if my baby’s feet touch the back of the vehicle seat?”

A: Your child can bend his legs easily and will be comfortable in a rear-facing seat. Injuries to the legs are rare for children facing the rear.” [www.healthychildren.org]

- all children 2 years or older (or those younger than 2 years of age who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car seat) should use a **forward-facing car seat** with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car seat's manufacturer.

--all children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car seat should use a **belt-positioning booster seat** until the vehicle seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4'9" (57") in height and are between the ages of 8 and 12 years of age.

- when children are old and large enough to use the **vehicle seat belt alone**, they should always use lap and should seat belts for optimal protection. All children younger than 13 years

should be restrained in the rear seats of vehicles for optimal protection.

So what do we recommend? We recommend that you **follow the AAP guidelines**. You will be within the law of Ohio, but taking the extra step to be safe by following the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.

By the way, the average child (boys and girls) does not reach 57 inches of height until they are 11 years of age. My twin sons stopped their booster seats at 12 years of age when they reached the height of 57 inches. Be safe!