

SAFE TRAVEL AND THE CAR SEAT...

In our three New York City locations, we receive a variety of car seat questions. How should I take my child in a taxi or for-hire service? Can I take my car seat on the plane? I would like to take this opportunity to review the basic car seat rules and then answer some questions about traveling with a baby in the big city.

First, let's review the 5 "best-practice recommendations" in the 2011 American Academy of Pediatric Guidelines. First, **"All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat until they are 2 years of age or the height or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of their CSS."** Two years may seem like a long time but not if you compare it to the Swedish model. Sweden has perhaps the best safety record when it comes to kids and cars. In Sweden, children ride in a rear-facing car seat until 4 years of age!

The second guideline states that **"children 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their CSS, should use a forward-facing CSS with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by the manufacturer of their CSS."** Many convertible car seats have a higher weight or height limit in the forward facing position.

The third guideline states that **"all children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their CSS should use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle lap-and-shoulder seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age"**. Your child is ready to graduate from the booster seat when the lap belt lies across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt crosses the middle of the chest. Also, children should be tall enough to sit back comfortably while both feet touch the ground.

The fourth guideline states that **"when children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use lap-and-shoulder seat belts for optimal protection"**. The final guideline states that **"all children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the rear seat of vehicles for optimal protection."**

In New York City, taxis are exempt from laws regarding car seats and seatbelts. We strongly encourage that parents follow the best-practice guidelines described above when traveling with a young child in a taking a taxi.

I also recommend considering public transport. If you "wear your baby" with a personal carrier and are smart about avoiding crowded buses and trains, this can be a very convenient options. I would recommend that you invest in a pair of noise reducing headphones if you are going to travel at some of the louder subway stations (i.e. Union Square on the green line).

When traveling by air, you should follow the same “best-practice guidelines” that you would in a car. Before going, make sure that your car seat is compliant with the FAA. I hope this helps and safe travels!