

What You Should Know About Keeping 8-12 year-old “Tweens” Safe In The Car



Why is Tween Safety Important?

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children
 - Many children are unrestrained or restrained improperly, which greatly increases their chances of injury¹
- Tweens (8-12 year olds) are at higher risk for crash injury.
 - As children age, their crash injury rate rises
 - Can be attributed to lower restraint use among older children²
- Tweens are at an important age for intervention.
 - Time of transition and developing life-long habits
 - Highly impressionable to peer *AND* parent influence³



What is the Issue?

- Less than half of tweens (8-12 year olds) involved in crashes wear safety belts⁴
 - Proper restraint use reduces risk of dying in a crash by 45%-60%, depending on the type of vehicle⁴
- Nearly three-fourths of tweens sit in the front seat when they are the sole passengers in the vehicle⁵
 - Rear seating until age 13 reduces risk of dying in a crash by 40%⁶



What Do You Need to Know?

- The two most important things tweens can do to protect themselves in a crash are to use the proper safety restraint (safety belt or booster seat) and sit in the back seat.
- People are 4x more likely to be killed if thrown from the vehicle. Safety restraints prevent being thrown from the vehicle and spread crash forces over the strongest parts of the body.
- Most crashes are frontal, so rear seating moves children farther from the point of impact and away from airbags that are not safe for smaller passengers. Rear seating cuts mortality risk in half.



Many Tweens May Still Need a Booster Seat

- When children are too small for a seat belt, the seat belt can cause injuries in a crash.
 - Many adults are surprised to learn that it can take up to 12 years for a child to be big enough for safety belts — close to 5 feet tall and between 80 and 100 pounds.
- Is your child ready for a seat belt? If you answer “no” to any of these questions, your child is not ready to transition out of the booster seat:
 - Does the child sit all the way in the back seat?
 - Do the child’s knees bend comfortably at the edge of the auto seat?
 - Does the shoulder belt cross the chest at the shoulder, not the neck?
 - Does the lap belt fit low and snug on the hip bones, touching the upper thighs?
 - Can the child stay seated like this for the whole trip?



What Should You Do?

- Parents should tell their children to sit in the back seat, and to buckle up
 - Require use of a booster seat until the belt fits properly
- Tell them why its important for every ride, every time (no exceptions)!
- To help keep them happy in the back seat, let them pick the radio station, and point the A/C vents in their direction.
- Practice buckling up yourself (children may not *hear* what you say, but they will *do* what you do!)



Thank You!

- Presentation slides provided as a public service by Eastern Virginia Medical School Pediatrics as part of the *Make It Click* program.
- Funding provided by the Virginia Highway Safety Office.
- For more information, please visit www.carsafetynow.org or contact: Dr. Kelli England Will at willke@evms.edu or 757-668-6449.

