

Car Safety

Hilliard Pediatrics, Inc. - Dr. Tim Teller, MD

Introduction

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 May 2019, the following are the current Ohio laws

(<https://ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/site/residents/resources/car-seat-law>) and the current AAP recommendations (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Car-Safety-Seats-Information-for-Families.aspx>). Realize the AAP recommendations are more conservative, safety wise.

Ohio Law

Ohio law says:

- Rear Facing Car Seat, Placed in the Back Seat:
 - Ohio law requires that young children be properly restrained in a car seat.
- Forward Facing Car Seat:
 - Once children outgrow their rear-facing seat, Ohio law requires that children less than 4 years old and 40 pounds be properly secured in a car seat.
- Booster Seat:
 - Once children reach the upper limit of their forward-facing car seat, Ohio law requires that children ride in a booster seat until they are at least 4'9" (57") or 8 years of age.
- Adult Seat Belt:
 - Children who have outgrown their booster seat should ride in the back seat until they are at least 13 years of age. Ohio law requires children 8-15 years, who are not secured in a car seat or booster seat, to be secured by a vehicle seat belt.

AAP Recommends

The AAP recommends:

- Rear Facing Car Seat:
 - Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car safety seat as long as possible, until they have reached the highest weight or height allowed by their seat. Most convertible seats have limits that allow children to ride rear-facing for 2 years or more.
- Forward Facing Car Seat:
 - Once they are facing forward, children should use a forward-facing car safety seat with a harness for as long as possible, until they reach the height and weight limits for their seats. Many seats can accommodate up to 65 pounds or more.

Car Safety

Hilliard Pediatrics, Inc. - Dr. Tim Teller, MD

- **Booster Seat:**
 - When children exceed these limits, they should use a belt-positioning booster seat until the shoulder seat belt fits properly. This is often when they have reached at least 4 feet 9 inches (57 inches) and are 8-12 years of age.
- **Adult Seat Belt:**
 - 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.
 - All children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the rear seats of vehicles for optimal protection.

Question

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.

Our Recommendations

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!