Infant Car Seat Safety

Here are some tips

Putting baby in the infant car seat
• You should always put your child directly into the car seat without any blanket or thick snowsuit. After you have tightened the seatbelt/harness, you may add blankets to cover your child and keep them warm.
• You should tighten the harness straps to allow an adult to fit only one finger under the strap at the infant’s shoulder.
• The harness straps should come from below or at the infant’s shoulders. Do not move harness straps to the next highest slot until the infant’s shoulders reach that slot.
• The retainer clip must be secured and at your infant’s nipple or armpit level.

In the car
• An infant should always ride in the back seat.
• Never place a rear-facing car seat in the front seat with a passenger air bag.
• The infant base should be installed tightly in the rear seat. When put in correctly, less than one inch of movement, either side to side or toward the front of the vehicle, is allowed.
• If you have only one child in the car, the middle of the back seat is the best place for them to be seated.

How long is my child in an infant car seat?
• Your child should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they either reach the weight limit for the seat or their head rests less than an inch from the top of the seat. The child is typically between 9 and 12 months.

About my car seat and products
• If you are using a used car seat for your infant, be sure that you know the history of the seat. Car seats that have been in a previous crash are not safe and should not be used.
• Most car seat manufacturers say their car seats expire and should not be used after the seats are 6 years old.
• Every car seat should have a sticker on the bottom or side giving the manufacture date and model number. You may check for recalls on your seat by calling 888-DASH-2-DOT (888-327-4236) or at www.seatcheck.org.
• Head and neck supports that did not come with your car seat when bought should not be used. Rolled blankets placed along the side the infant work well for head and neck support.
• Car seat covers that fit over the car seat like a shower cap are okay. Those that fit under the infant can affect how tight you can get the straps and are not suggested to be used.

After the infant seat
• “Infant-only” seats are designed for rear-facing only. Larger, “convertible” seats fit children from birth to about 4 years old or 40 pounds. These seats can be used as rear facing after your child outgrows the infant carrier. Once you child reaches the weight limit for the harness as rear facing, or the age of 2, the seat can then be converted to forward facing.
• When your child meets the limits of the rear-facing infant seat, you should look for a convertible car seat with a five-point harness that can be installed facing rear and then later facing forward.
• The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that children remain rear facing until they reach the weight limit for the harness in the rear facing position or they reach the age of 2. This is safe as long as the top of the head is below the top of the seat back.
• It is fine for the child’s feet to be touching the back rest of the back seat.

Call your local hospital about car seat inspections. This service is often free of charge.