



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Restrain Your Children

National Child Passenger Safety Week September 18–24, 2011

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC.

[Ms. Laird] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Susan Laird, filling in for your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

When parents are on the road, one of the most important things they can do to keep their kids safe is to make sure they're properly buckled up.

Dr. Erin Sauber-Schatz is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of properly restraining young passengers in motor vehicles. Welcome to the show, Dr. Sauber-Schatz.

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Thank you, Susan.

[Ms. Laird] Dr. Sauber-Schatz, how many children die each year from injuries suffered in a motor-vehicle crash?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Well, in the United States alone, over a thousand kids under 16 die in a crash every year, and over 200,000 are injured. When you break these numbers down, this equals about three child deaths and over 550 child injuries every single day.

[Ms. Laird] That's an enormous number. What can we do to prevent those injuries and deaths?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Every time a child rides in a car, they need to be in a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt, based on their age, height, and weight. It's hard to believe, but in 2009, 45 percent of children that died in a crash were unrestrained.

[Ms. Laird] How does a parent know what safety seat to put their infant in?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] All seat transitions depend on the child's age, height, weight, and the height and weight limits of your car seat which are determined by the manufacturer. And there are really four steps in child passenger safety. The first step is a rear-facing child seat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all infants and children under two years of age should ride in a rear-facing seat. The reason for this is that research has shown us that rear-facing seats provide the best support for the head and spine during a crash. So rear-facing seats are really the safest way for infants and young children to ride.

[Ms. Laird] When should a parent move their child out of a rear-facing car seat?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Usually between the ages of two and four a child will reach the top rear-facing height or weight limit. Once this happens, they move to a forward-facing seat, and children should travel in the forward-facing car seat with a harness until they again reach the top height or weight limit. Make sure at this step the car seat's top tether is also used.

[Ms. Laird] So is a booster seat the third step?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Yes, you're right. Usually between the ages of four and seven, a child will outgrow the forward facing car seat and should move on to belt-positioning booster seat. Booster seats are designed to position the car seat's seat belt to properly fit a child who isn't quite big enough for just a seat belt.

[Ms. Laird] When is a seat belt alone enough protection for a child?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Between the ages of eight and 12, a child will grow to be four feet nine inches tall. This is the height when a car seat's belt should fit a child properly, without the use of a booster seat. Proper seat belt fit means that the seat belt lies across the upper thighs, not the stomach, and is snug across the shoulder and chest, not the neck.

[Ms. Laird] I know parents are concerned that their car seats may not be properly installed. Where can they get help with this?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Parents should read their instruction manual that comes with their seat, but there are also inspection stations that have nationally-certified child passenger safety technicians that will inspect and often install your car seat, as well as give you hands on advice, for free. Local inspection stations can be found on-line, through many sources, including the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website at NHTSA, or NHTSA.gov.

[Ms. Laird] What other tips can you offer to keep kids safe on the road?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] Another tip is that all children under the age of 13 should ride in a back seat, because the back seat is the safest place for a child to ride. Kids grow quickly, so pay attention to the height and weight limits of your seat, and be sure you're using your seat correctly for your child's height, weight, and age. Also, know the history of your car seat. Seats that have been involved in a motor vehicle crash should not be used again. And take the time to find a car seat that will work for you, your car, and your child, and make sure that seat is installed according to the owner's manual, because it really could save your child's life.

[Ms. Laird] Where can listeners get more information about keeping kids safe in a motor vehicle?

[Dr. Sauber-Schatz] More information is available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov and in the search box, just enter "child passenger safety."

[Ms. Laird] Thanks, Dr. Sauber-Schatz. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Erin Sauber-Schatz about the importance of properly restraining young children in motor vehicles. Proper use

of car seats, booster seats, and seat belts helps protect children from serious injury and reduces the risk of death by more than half. So before you turn that key, make sure all kids are properly restrained for their age, height, and weight. It could save their life.

Until next time, be well. This is Susan Laird for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.