Tips for Putting Your Baby in a Car Seat

If an accident occurs, you want to protect your baby as much as possible. So, it is important to put your baby in the car seat correctly, with the harness snug yet comfortable.

• Dress your baby in thin clothing that allows the legs to move freely. Avoid a bulky coat, snow suit or sack-type outfit that does not allow the legs to move freely. A blanket or a “cozy” that zips over the car safety seat can go over the baby once the harness is secured.

• Place your baby in the car safety seat buttocks first, with the baby’s back resting against the safety seat back.

• Do not place padding under or behind your baby or use any sort of car seat insert (including head supports) unless it came with the seat.

• The harness in your rear-facing seat should be in slots that are at or below your baby’s shoulders.

• Place the straps over your baby, coming together at the buckle. One leg is on each side of the crotch strap with the harness across the baby’s hips or thighs (not the stomach), and each arm is outside the shoulder strap, not under it.

• The harness straps should be flat and not twisted.

• Tighten the harness so that it is snug with no slack, but not so tight as to be uncomfortable.

• Check that the harness is snug enough by trying to pinch the harness strap along its length (not its width). If you can grab some of the fabric, it is too loose.

• Slide the chest clip (shoulder harness retainer clip) up so it is at mid-chest level (the top of the clip should be even with your baby’s armpits).

• If your baby slouches down or to the side, try placing rolled receiving blankets in the spaces on each side of the baby’s body to provide support. Be sure to keep the blankets outside of the harness and out from under the baby.

• If there is a gap between the crotch strap and your baby’s crotch, try placing a rolled diaper or washcloth in the gap to prevent slumping.

Source: Safety Belt Safe USA, 2011