



ASH FACTS...

April 2006

How safe is your child in a motor vehicle?

In our fast paced world, families are spending more time travelling in motor vehicles. While auto transportation is a quick, efficient way to get around, it is not without risk. Motor vehicle collision is the leading cause of death and one of the leading causes of hospitalization in children 1-19 years old. The good news is that there are things parents and children can do to reduce the risk.

Car seats, booster seats & seat belts

Every passenger should be buckled up appropriately for every ride. Parents should set a good example by using seatbelts. Children are more likely to be restrained properly if the parent is restrained properly. For adults and teens, seatbelts and airbags offer good protection in a crash. For children, it takes some planning to make sure that they are in the most appropriate restraint system (car seat, booster seat or seat belt) and the safest position in the vehicle for their size and age.

Children aged 12 and under should ride in the "Kid Zone", the rear seat of the vehicle. The safest seat is the centre of the rear seat and usually the youngest child should be seated there. The rear seat is safer since in a frontal collision, the child is further away from the impact. Also, front-seat airbags can cause serious injuries or even death to children.

One common mistake parents make is moving the child to the next stage of car seat too soon. Parents should check the weight and height limits on the car seat and keep the child in the seat as long as possible. Regardless of age, a child who weighs less than 40 pounds should stay in a forward-facing car seat, according to current car seat recommendations. Some seats can be used up to 48 pounds (check the label).

Once a child has outgrown the weight or height limits of the car seat, he/she should be moved up to a booster seat. A booster seat raises the child up so that the seat belt fits properly across the child's

hips and shoulder. The child should stay in the booster as long as possible, until 8 or 9 years old. Some new boosters are made for children up to 100 pounds. Children who are in a collision and not in a booster seat are at risk of "Seat Belt Syndrome", severe injuries to the internal organs and spine resulting from the seat belt being in the wrong place. Children old enough for a seat belt should never place the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back, which can also cause serious and fatal internal injuries in a collision.

A word about child restraints...

A child can put a lot of pressure on parents to move out of a car seat or move up to the front seat too soon. While it can be tough, parents need to be firm and make every ride a safe ride.

Teen drivers

In Manitoba, teen drivers are safer due to our Graduated Licensing Program (GDL). This three-stage program is designed to help new drivers gradually acquire the knowledge and skills needed to drive safely. Each stage has specific restrictions on the new driver to reduce the likelihood that they will engage in risky driving behaviour. The restrictions are reduced as the driver passes from one stage of license to another. Parents are a key part of the program, in consistently enforcing these restrictions. Alcohol is involved in many fatal collisions involving teens. Strictly enforce a "zero alcohol tolerance" rule for all drivers in your family.

ASH FACTS are brought to you by Manitoba's *Agencies for School Health*. ASH is an interagency network committed to promoting a coordinated approach to health education in Manitoba schools. *ASH Facts* are supported by Manitoba Education, Citizenship, and Youth and provides an opportunity to effectively share and distribute accurate health information within your school community.

For an electronic copy of this ASH FACTS, as well as others, please visit: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ks4/cur/physhlth/ash.html>