

# WHATCOM COUNTY CHILD HEALTH NOTES

Promoting early identification and partnerships between families, primary health care providers & the community.

## CAR SEATS FOR LOW BIRTH WEIGHT INFANTS

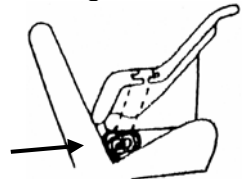


Figure 1

**POSITIONING LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (LBW) BABIES CAN BE CHALLENGING**, particularly if the infant is still small. Most car seats on the market are designed for infants weighing more than 3.5 kg (7 lbs.); some manufacturers make smaller models for preemies (e.g., Baby Trend, Evenflo, Peg Perego, and Safetyfirst).

### WHAT YOU AND PARENTS OF LBW INFANTS IN YOUR PRACTICE NEED TO KNOW:

- Infants must be strapped **snuggly** into car seats in order to breathe well and stay safe.
- Padding **cannot be added** to a car seat **before** an infant is snuggly strapped in.
- LBW infants should be in a **rear-facing** car seat as long as possible (until they are at least 12 months old corrected age and weigh over 20 pounds).
- The back seat is safest for infants and children, especially if there are airbags.
- A rear-facing infant must be reclined at a 30 to 45 degree angle (from vertical). Tightly rolled newspaper or cloth can be used as a wedge under the front of the car seat if it tips forward because of the angle of the back seat.



Newspaper

### FITTING INFANT IN THE CAR SEAT:

#### DEPTH--

- Select a car seat with crotch strap distance less than 5.5" from seat back.
- Infant's buttocks must be all the way back against the car seat.
- **Do not put padding** behind infant.
- **After** infant is properly snugged into car seat, a small roll can be used to fill any gap between infant's crotch and the buckle/strap, to keep the infant from slumping (see figure 1 above).

#### HEIGHT--

- Select a car seat with the lowest shoulder strap slots 6 to 8" from the seat bottom.
- **Do not put padding** under infant's buttocks.
- Slots used for shoulder straps must be at or below the infant's shoulders.
- Shoulder straps should fit snugly, with chest clip at level of the armpits (not at neck or on tummy).
- Do not select a car seat with a tray or shield.

#### WIDTH--

- **After** harness is adjusted snugly, blanket rolls can be placed on each side of infant to keep the head and body from falling sideways (see figure 1 above).

#### TIPS ABOUT CLOTHING--

- Do not wrap infant in blankets or use snowsuits. Snowsuits, bulky clothes or blankets prevent a safe car seat fit.
- Extra blankets can be placed **OVER** the straps once infant is snapped in snugly.
- A snowsuit can be added when infant is taken out of car seat.

#### TIPS ABOUT BREATHING

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all infants born less than 37 weeks gestation have a car seat check before hospital discharge to assure no apnea, bradycardia or oxygen desaturations when properly secured in their personal car seat.
- Infants need breaks out of car seats; schedule hourly stops.
- If possible, have an adult in the back seat with an infant in a car seat.

#### CRASH-TESTED CAR BEDS

- are only used if an infant cannot pass a car seat trial in a standard car seat.
- are not as safe as car seats .
- A child who needs a car bed should only be taken on trips which are absolutely necessary.
- Before transitioning from car bed to car seat, the infant must be tested by pulse oximetry when positioned properly in his/her personal car seat.

## WHATCOM COUNTY RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

 **For children under age three:** Whatcom County Early Childhood Evaluation Clinic @ 676-6762 ext 32105

 **For children age three and older:** Local Public School Special Education Program by District

District:	Phone	Fax	District:	Phone	Fax
Bellingham	(360)676-6514	(360)676-2692	Meridian	(360)398-9898	(360)398-8966
Blaine	(360)332-5213	(360)332-7568	Mt Baker	(360)383-2012	(360)383-2014
Ferndale	(360)383-9212	(360)383-9230	Nooksack	(360)988-4754	(360)988-8983
Lynden	(360)354-2893	(360)354-7662			


### SPECIAL NEEDS INFORMATION AND RESOURCES


 **Local:** **Children with Special Health Care Needs:** (360) 676-6762 ext 32105  
**Infant-Toddler Early Intervention Program:** (360) 734-5121 ext 209  
**Parent to Parent:** (360) 255-6402

 **Regional:** **Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center:**  
**Health Professional Hotline:** 1-800-293-2462  
**Parent Resource Line:** 1-866-987-2500

 **Internet:** **Family Village (extensive family resources for CSHCN):** [www.familyvillage.wisc.edu](http://www.familyvillage.wisc.edu)  
**Family Voices(links to national and state family support):** [www.familyvoices.org](http://www.familyvoices.org)

### SAFETY RESTRAINT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

 **Local** **Jean Jenkins, RN, Certified Car Seat Technician** (360) 676-6762 ext 32107  
**Whatcom County Health Department**

 **Regional** **The Safety Restraint Coalition-to arrange for a car seat check up (to see if a car seat is properly secured in the car, or any questions about new or used car seats)** 1-800-BUCKLEUP  
[www.800buckleup.org](http://www.800buckleup.org)

 **Internet** **American Academy of Pediatrics “Safe Transportation of Premature and Low Birth Weight Infants”** [www.aap.org/policy/01351.html](http://www.aap.org/policy/01351.html)  
**Fact Sheet, 2006 Safe Ride News Publications** 1-800-403-1424  
[www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com)

Children with Special Health Care Needs  
 Whatcom County Health Department  
 1500 N State, Bellingham, WA 98225

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