

WINTER SAFETY & CAR SEATS

A Parent's Guide to Safely Transporting & Buckling Up Children in Cold Weather

Keeping Kids Warm without Compromising their Safety in Car Seats

Securing toddlers and pre-school children in car seats:

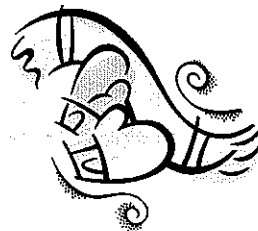
- Avoid using heavy snowsuits or extra bulky coats. The extra padding in coats and snowsuits will make it difficult to properly tighten the child safety seat's harness. In a crash, the padding will compress, allowing slack in the harness.
- Get in the vehicle and close the door before securing the child with the harness of the child safety seat. By closing the door, the child is out of the direct wind and/or cold. This will enable you to spend enough time correctly securing the child without being exposed to the elements.
- Many bulky winter coats and snow wear for older children should also be removed to allow for proper harness adjustment. Secure the harness on the child and then place the coat over the child for warmth.

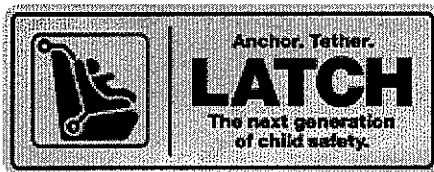
Securing infants using rear-facing infant carriers:

- Store the infant carrier portion of the child safety seat inside the house to keep it warm. Keeping the child safety seat at room temperature will reduce the loss of the child's body heat in the vehicle.
- Secure the child properly in the infant carrier while inside the house to avoid the child being outside in the cold for too long.
- Cover the baby with a warm blanket after the child is secured properly in the child safety seat. The blanket should be placed over the harnessed child so it will not interfere with the child safety seat's harness system.
- Do not use non-regulated products such as blankets that attach to the child safety seat through the harness system. Remember, if the item did not come with the child safety seat, it has not been crash tested and may interfere with the protection provided in a crash.

General Winter Travel Safety Tips

- **Always carry extra blankets** in the vehicle for all passengers, along with non-perishable food supplies and other necessities in case of a roadside emergency in inclement weather.
- Allow time to warm up the vehicle and brush off any snow or ice before entering and securing passengers.
- Keep projectiles like snowbrushes, ice scrapers, and kitty litter in the trunk.
- Allow extra time for travel. Driving in wintry conditions will require you to slow down and be extra cautious.
- Explain to young children that **driving on snowy roads requires concentration and they will need to sit quietly during the trip.**
- When shopping for a winter coat, buy one that is warm but not too bulky. There are many coats that provide warmth, but are not extra thick. Coats that are not bulky allow for a better fit of the child safety seat harness without compromising the child's warmth. Coats that are not bulky will also allow for a better fit of the lap and shoulder belt.





LATCH OVERVIEW

Lower Anchors and Tethers for CHILDREN

What is LATCH?

LATCH stands for **L**ower **A**nchors and **T**ethers for **C**hildren. Since it is estimated that 4 out of 5 car seats are not installed correctly, the LATCH system was developed to make it easier to correctly install child safety seats without seat belts.

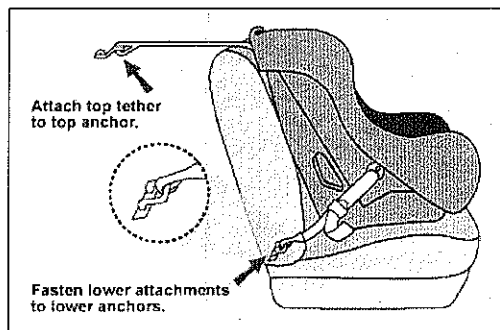
All new vehicles, as well as infant, convertible and forward-facing child safety seats with harnesses made after September 1, 2002, are equipped with LATCH. The LATCH system consists of built-in straps and hooks/attachments on the child safety seat and anchor hardware in the vehicle:

In your vehicle:

- ◆ **Lower Anchors-** Cars with LATCH have a minimum of two LATCH-equipped seating positions in the rear seat, each one has two small bars called "anchors". You can find these in the space between the rear seat back and bottom seat cushion.
- ◆ **Top tether anchors** -The 3 anchor points are located on the rear shelf area in passenger cars. In other vehicles such as minivans and SUVs, the anchor points could be on the floor, under the vehicle seat or even on the ceiling. Check your vehicle owner's manual for designated locations.

On your child's car seat:

- ◆ **Lower anchor strap**—This strap has two hooks or buckles and a manual adjuster that is placed through the belt path of the car seat.
- ◆ **Top tether**—A straight or V-shaped length of webbing attached near the top of the car seat. The tether has a hook and an adjuster to secure the top of the car seat to limit forward movement



Installing a Car Seat Using LATCH

Here are some basic installation tips for installing a LATCH equipped car seat into a vehicle with the LATCH system:

1. First, read both your vehicle owner's manual and child safety seat instruction manual before starting.
2. Fasten the child safety seat's lower attachments to your vehicle's lower anchors in the designated seating position. Tighten and adjust the straps according to the car seat instructions.
Tip: You may need to use your body's weight to press the seat down while tightening the straps.
3. If you are using a child safety seat in the forward-facing position, attach the child safety seat's top tether strap to the correct vehicle anchor point and pull to tighten.
4. Check to see if the child safety seat is in tightly. You should not be able to move the child safety seat more than an inch from side to side or forward when holding the car seat at the belt path

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about LATCH

Q: Is the LATCH system safer than vehicle seat belts?

A: When your child's safety seat is installed and used correctly, whether with LATCH or with a seat belt, the child will be equally well-protected in a crash.

Q: Can I use my car seat that has LATCH in a vehicle without it?

A: Yes, just be sure to install it correctly with the seat belt. Check both your vehicle manual and car seat instructions.

Q: How do I know which vehicle seating positions are equipped with LATCH?

A: LATCH anchors are required in at least 2 seating positions in a rear seat of your car. The most common spots are the right and left outboard positions (next to the windows). This can vary, however, by vehicle. **Use only the LATCH anchors in the designated seating positions listed in your vehicle owner's manual and do not put your child's safety seat in the center position unless approved in your car.**

Q: Should I use seat belts along with LATCH?

A: No, the LATCH anchors and attachments take the place of seat belts. It's a good idea to tuck the seat belts out of the way, but do not interfere with the lower anchoring system.

