

## **Child Passenger Safety Seats Save Lives Script**

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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The tragic death of a 21-year-old Pekin, Illinois mother in an automobile accident in mid-October drew attention to one important statistic: child safety seats save lives. While the young mother lost her life when she was broadsided by another car, her young son - who was secured in a car seat in the back seat - survived with only minor injuries.

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of injury to children under 14 years old. Having a child in the correct car seat can reduce the risk of fatal injury to infants by 71% and to toddlers by 54%.

It's the law in the state of Illinois that a child must be in car seat from newborn until age 8. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends children ride in rear facing car seats until the age of 2.

"A lot of times parents do not know what type of car seat their child should be in. They think 'my child is 3-years-old so they should be in forward-facing seat.' But if they're a small 3-year-old, they may still need to be in a convertible, rear-facing seat," says Ginger Streitmatter, Child Passenger Safety Technician with OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois in Peoria.

In addition to using the incorrect seat for the size and age of the child, four out of five car seats are installed improperly. Streitmatter encourages everyone to start by reading the car seat manufacturer's instructions as well as your vehicle owner's manual on how to install the seat using the seat belt or lower anchors and top tether.

"A properly-installed car seat shouldn't move more than one inch front-to-back or side-to-side regardless if you are using a forward-facing car seat or a rear-facing car seat," says Streitmatter. "Push down on the seat or base while pulling the attaching belt tightly to get a snug fit."

Once the seat is properly installed in the car, parents must make sure the child is correctly in the seat. You should not be able to pinch the any extra webbing on the harness straps securing the child into the seat.

"The chest clip needs to be level with the arm pits, because if you get into an accident, this is what's going to keep your child safe. We don't like to think about projectiles in the car, but people are also projectiles. If the mesh restraint is not properly placed on the child they can actually be thrown from the seat into front seat passengers."

It's also important to always require your children ride secured properly in their child safety seat, even if they whine and beg not to.

### **SOT GINGER STREITMATTER (Child Passenger Safety Technician - OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois)**

(If you can pinch them, they're not tight enough. I get a lot of parents who say "oh, my child doesn't like that' or 'that's uncomfortable for them.' The thing is, if you were tightening them and having them tight from day one, they would already be used to it. :18)

Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians with OSF HealthCare Children's Hospital of Illinois are available to answer questions and provide education and instruction on car seat usage and installation. Additionally, the team conducts car seat safety checks in conjunction with other agencies that are free to the public. Check the OSF Children's Hospital website for a [schedule of events](#).

More information on proper car seat safety and installation can be found at [www.SafeKids.org](http://www.SafeKids.org) and [www.SaferCar.gov/parents](http://www.SaferCar.gov/parents).