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## **AUTO SAFETY**

Automobile accidents are the MAJOR cause of childhood injuries and death. Over one million children are injured and many thousands die in the United States each year due to car accidents. Compliance with well-proven safety guidelines drastically reduce disabling injuries and fatalities.

By adhering to automobile safety guidelines, you can significantly reduce the risks of harm to your child. Children are at higher risk for injury from a car accident than they are from illnesses that may bring them to the office.

### **SAFETY GUIDELINES:**

1. Infants less than one year must ride in a rear facing car seat. 90% of car seats are improperly installed. Check with your local fire department to have a certified fire marshal inspect the car seat.
2. Familiarize yourself with the height and weight limitations of the current car seat. Many babies will outgrow their car seat before one year of age. Depending on the type of car seat, your child may be too tall for the seat at 26 inches.
3. Convertible car seats will accommodate taller children in the rear position. This type of seats can be moved to forward position when the child meets those requirements.
4. An infant must remain rear facing until the child is BOTH **20 pounds AND** at least **1 year of age**.
5. Inactivate side air bags if they are next to where the car seat is located.
6. Children over 40 pounds may ride in a booster seat. In Virginia, children need to be in car seats until they are **80 pound and 8 years of age**, unless the child is 4 feet 9 inches. High back booster seats will provide whiplash protection if the child's ears are higher than the vehicle seat back.
7. Never let a child out of the car or booster seat while the car is in motion. There are no exceptions. If the child is out of their seat the car must be stopped until the child is in their seat.
8. If you are in a car accident, the car seats must be replaced immediately. During an accident, the car seat interior has pieces that give way and break. This helps to soften the forceful impact of the accident to the child. The car seat is no longer protective after an impact.

9. Children under 13 years should never sit in the front seat of a car.
10. Everyone in the car must be wearing their safety belt. Children learn by our example.
11. Always use extra caution when driving with children in the car. They are your most precious cargo.