

Car Seat Use after a Car Crash

Children need to be safe while riding in cars and other vehicles.

Wisconsin law requires children to be restrained in a car. The law says:

- A child safety seat must be used until a child is 4 years old and 40 pounds.
- A booster seat is then required until children are age 8 or 80 pounds or 4' 9".

These are the minimums required by the law. The American Academy of Pediatrics and injury prevention professionals recommend even more to protect children in a crash.

Can my child's car seat be used after a car crash?

After a crash, you cannot be sure that your child's car seat is safe. Children's Hospital of Wisconsin recommends that your child's car seat be replaced after a crash. You want to be sure your child is in a car seat that will protect them from injury if you are in another crash.

A car seat that has been in a crash should be destroyed. This can be done by cutting and taking the harness straps off of the seat. Once the straps are removed, the seat should be thrown away.

Note: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, NHTSA (www.nhtsa.dot.gov) suggests that you contact your car insurance company about replacing the car seat.

What about a very minor crash?

NHTSA says that sometimes, car seats can be used after minor crashes. A minor crash is when **all** of the following are true:

- After the crash, check the car seat and under all of the seat padding. There should be no cracks or marks that may have been caused by the crash.
- The car that the car seat was installed in was driven from the scene of the crash.
- The door nearest the car seat was not damaged.
- There were no injuries to any people in the car.
- The air bags (if any) did not inflate.



If **all** of the above are true, families should check with the car seat company about using the seat. Phone numbers are on the car seat label. They are also listed in the car seat manual.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.