

Car Seat Trials

What is a car seat trial?

A car seat trial is a test to see how your infant does in their car seat before going home. Some infants can't safely ride sitting up in a car seat and may have trouble breathing during a longer ride home. This is a practice test in the hospital to see how it goes before the real ride home. If your infant has been in the hospital since birth they may have to have a car seat trial within 3 days of going home.



How is it done?

Your infant will be put in their car seat. They must be able to be in a position that is set by the seats' manufacturer. Infants are monitored for breathing problems for at least 90 minutes. The trial can be up to 3 hours if the car ride home is longer. Infants who have trouble during the test may need to be sent home in a car seat where infants lie down. This type is called a car bed.

Safety tips

- It is best to get your car seat installed by a certified car seat technician at a fitting station*.
- Car seats should be used for riding in the car. They are not cribs. Car seats should not be used as a place for infants to sleep in the house.
- Travel should be limited the first few months of life. The first few times your infant rides in the car, an adult should ride in the back seat with them.
- Infants should always ride facing the rear of the vehicle. The straps on the car seat should fit snugly. The chest clip should be at armpit level.
- Avoid bulky clothing like a snow suits when riding in a car seat as the harness cannot be adjusted snugly. Instead, infants should wear thin warm layers such as fleece or thinsulate[®]. Blankets can be added for warmth after they are buckled in their car seat.
- Avoid adding anything to the car seat that didn't come with the seat.
- Car seat companies do their own crash testing. Be sure to follow the directions in the car seat manual.

*Go to chw.org/carseats for a list of car seat fitting stations.

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 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.