

# Safe Transportation of Your Child with Disabilities

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Children riding in a motor vehicle without proper protection (using a child safety seat, booster seat or safety belt) are at risk of injuries even in a minor crash. While every child deserves protection from injury, transporting children with special health care needs and disabilities requires special attention.

## Why do they need special protection?

- They may not be able to use the conventional auto restraints, or may have conditions that affect their ability to be properly restrained. For example, children using hip spica casts, splints or other orthopedic devices cannot sit in standard car seats.
- Children with challenging behaviors may have a difficult time following the safety rules while the vehicle is moving.
- Children with muscle tone abnormalities, such as in cerebral palsy, may have poor head/neck control and need the support of a child restraint.
- Some may need to travel with wheelchairs or medical equipment which also need to be secured in the vehicle.

## Where to get low-cost car seats and specialty restraints?

Since car seats for children with special needs are often expensive, call the National Easter Seal Society at (800) 221-6827 to find out if car seat loan programs are available in your area. Your health care provider may also help you to access proper resources. If not, check with your insurance for cost coverage.

If your child is attending a program that provides transportation services, such services must include

children with disabilities. If special transportation requirements (i.e. special pick up/drop off requirements, special seating requirements, special equipment, or any special assistance) are needed, it will be specified in the child's Individualized Education Plan.

## Useful tips to remember

- *Talk to your pediatrician.* Find about your child's positioning and transportation needs.
- *Use a safety restraint that is appropriate for your child's weight, developmental stage and condition.* Stay up-to-date on what might be available for your child.
- *Do not alter a car safety seat.* If the car seat does not match the child's needs, find another one. Always follow instructions for the car seat and the vehicle.
- *Install the car seat securely.* Make the seat belt tight. Use a top tether strap if one is available. If both vehicle and car seat have Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH) attachments, use them. Please always check the labels and remember that LATCH cannot be used for children over 50 pounds.
- *The back seat is the safest place for all children to ride.* Never transport a child rear-facing in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger air bag unless the air bag has an on/off switch and has been shut off.

## Where to find additional information?

For additional information please see the following resources and references or call the Child Care Healthline at (800) 333-3212. You may also take a child passenger safety awareness class or even a certification course from the Special Needs Technician training program to help other parents.

by **A. Rahman Zamani, MD, MPH**

## Resources and References

American Academy of Pediatrics. Car Seat Shopping Guide for Children with Special Needs at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Transportation Tips for Children at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cps/newtips/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cps/newtips/)

Safe Ride News at [www.saferidenews.com](http://www.saferidenews.com)

EZ-On Products Inc. (sells special needs equipment) at [www.ezonpro.com/](http://www.ezonpro.com/)



Provided by California Childcare Health Program  
For more information, please contact:  
Healthline 1-800-333-3212

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