

# Kids & Air Bags Don't Mix!

Does your vehicle have air bags in front? An air bag could kill your child in a crash!

## Why are air bags dangerous to kids?

In a crash, an air bag comes out of the dashboard or steering wheel faster than the blink of an eye. When fully open, it cushions passengers from the force of the crash. Air bags have saved many lives of adults and teens riding buckled up.

The force of the air bag is greatest when it bursts out of its compartment. This force can seriously injure or kill anyone who is very close to it, such as:

- An infant in a rear-facing car seat
- A child riding in an adult's lap, unbuckled, or not using the shoulder belt
- A driver sitting very close to the steering wheel

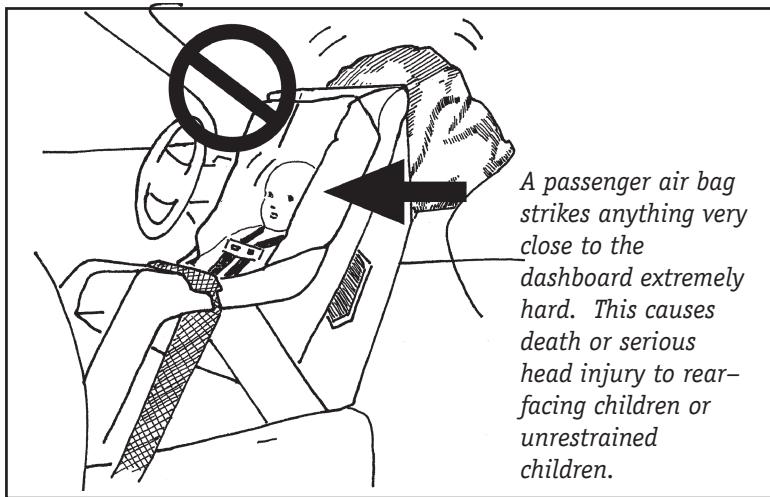
## Basics of Air Bag Safety

- Know if the vehicle you are riding in has air bags. (See back for details.)
- Buckle up everyone. Keep kids aged 12 and under in the back seat whenever possible. If your vehicle does not have a back seat, see the other side of this sheet.
- NEVER carry a baby in a rear-facing car seat in front with an air bag unless it has been turned off.
- A baby or child riding unbuckled in front or on an adult's lap is also at very high risk of death.
- Drivers, especially those who are very short, should sit as far back from the steering wheel as possible (at least 10 inches).

## Keep kids in back!

**ALWAYS put your baby in the back seat.**

A rear-facing infant is in the most danger from the air bag. **When the air bag strikes a rear-facing car seat,** the impact causes severe brain injury (see picture).



So buckle up your baby in the back seat unless the air bag has been turned off. (Keep the baby facing the rear until at least age 1. Facing an infant forward too early could cause spinal injury.)

Some parents feel uncomfortable about putting their baby in back. **Remember, there is much more danger to a healthy baby from the air bag than from riding in back.** Stop the car if you need to tend to your baby.

**A child age 12 and under (shorter than a small adult)** also could be killed by the air bag. A child who is not buckled up will slide forward when the driver slams on the brakes. If the car crashes, he would be too close to the air bag as it inflates. Children using only the lap part of a seat belt or leaning forward also could be killed.

**For answers to common air bag questions, see the back side.**

*Make  
Every Ride  
A Safe Ride*



## How do I know if my car has air bags?

A driver air bag is stored in the center part of the steering wheel.

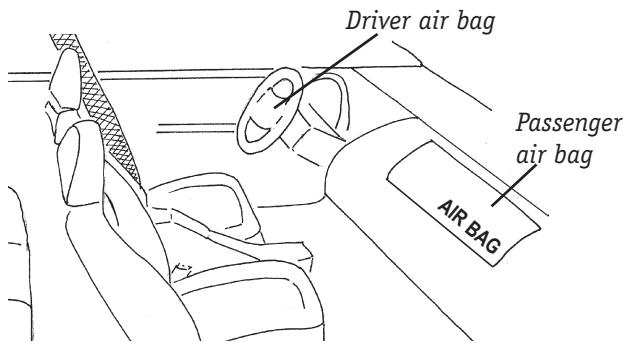
A passenger air bag is stored in the right side of the dashboard. It may be in the flat area just below the windshield or the area facing the passenger. You may be able to see the edges of its cover.

**Look for the words "AIR BAG" or other letters on the cover** (picture). These also mean "air bag":

**SRS**—Supplemental Restraint System

**SIR**—Supplemental Inflatable Restraint

The vehicle owner's manual should also tell you. Warning labels are required on the sun visors.



All cars since model year 1998 must have both driver and passenger air bags. Both air bags are required in all pickups, SUVs, and vans starting in the 1999 model year. Many vehicles made earlier in the 1990s have air bags, too. Check the owner's manual and look for the letters on the dashboard and the warning on the sun visor.

Many newer cars have lower-speed air bags or "dual stage" air bags. These may reduce injuries for adults but still can be deadly for rear-facing babies and unbuckled older children. **Keep kids in back.**

## What about side-impact air bags?

Side-impact air bags are in the front seats of some late-model cars. They are not required but may be found in the sides of the front seats, in the front doors or frame, or above the doors. **Very few** cars have side air bags in the back seat. See the owner's manual for information. Look for labels on the seat, door, or door frame: AIR BAG, SIPS, IC, or SIAB.

A side-impact air bag inflates only a few inches toward the passenger. In a crash, it can prevent serious head or chest injury. However, it might injure a child leaning against the door of the car.

If your car has side-impact air bags in the back seat, make sure your child does not lean against the door or ask the auto dealer to turn it off.

## What if my car has no back seat or only a very small one?

Many sports cars and pickup trucks have no back seats or the seats are too small to install a rear-facing car seat correctly. Many recent models come with on/off switches, so the driver can safely buckle up the baby or child in the front seat. However, manufacturers are not required to install these switches.

Older trucks or sport cars with passenger air bags may not have on/off switches. In this case, if you often must buckle up a baby or child in front, you may be able to get a switch installed. **For details on getting an on/off switch**, see Resources (NHTSA or Air Bag Campaign), below.

## What if I have no choice but to transport a child in the front seat?

- **Infants:** There is NO safe way to carry an infant in the front seat in a typical rear-facing car seat unless the air bag has been switched off.

One rear-facing car seat claims to protect a baby from the force of an air bag. It has been tested with air bags by its manufacturer, XSCi. It should be used in the front seat only *if there is no alternative*. See Resources, below.

- **Children over age 1:** Buckle up a forward-facing child correctly. If using a forward-facing car seat, make the seat belt tight and the harness snug. If your child uses a booster seat or seat belt, make sure he or she does not lean forward.

Remember: A child is safer riding in the back seat in a properly used car seat or seat belt.

- **Move the passenger seat back** as far as possible.
- **If the air bag has an on/off switch**, make sure it has been turned off when a child rides in front. Turn it back on to protect adult passengers.

## Resources:

- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 888-DASH-2-DOT or 800-424-9153 (tty), [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
- Air Bag Seat Belt Safety Campaign, [www.nsc.org/airbag.htm](http://www.nsc.org/airbag.htm)
- SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., 800-745-7233, [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)
- XSci, 800-630-6850, [www.safeinfant.com](http://www.safeinfant.com)