Car Safety for Children with Osteogenesis Imperfecta

Children with Osteogenesis Imperfecta may have positioning needs that can affect travel. This brochure answers some questions you may have about safely transporting your child.

What if my child has breathing problems?

If your infant has breathing problems, lying flat in a car bed may be helpful *(Figure 1)* instead of sitting upright in a car seat. A car bed that meets federal safety standards allowing your child to lie down when being transported. Check with your infant's physician about whether traveling flat is recommended, which car bed is best, and how to acquire a car bed.

Figure 1

How long should I keep my child rear-facing?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends you keep your child rear-facing as long as possible until they reach the maximum height and weight for the car seat they are using. Since children with Osteogenesis Imperfecta have bones that may break easily, riding rear-facing helps support their entire body with increased protection, especially the spine. Most rear-facing only car seats go up to 35 pounds and convertible car seats allow children to ride rear-facing up to 40 to 50 pounds

What car seat should I use when I turn my child around forward-facing?

Use a car seat that has a 5-point harness until your child outgrows it. Most convertible car seats / all-in-one car seats can be used forward-facing up to 65 pounds and 49 inches, or until your child's shoulders are above the top harness slots. A combination car seat also will allow your child to remain in a 5-point harness up to 65 pounds. Some combination and convertible seats have 5-point harnesses that fit larger children up to 65 pounds *(Figure 2)*. A combination seat can be changed to a belt-positioning booster seat when your child grows out of the harness.

Figure 2

Can I add extra padding to my child's car seat?

Do Not add extra padding behind or below your child. Your child's car seat may not work as intended in a crash situation with extra padding. Look for a car seat that already has enough padding to help your child ride comfortably. Some adaptive restraints (large medical seats and adaptive booster seats) have more padding and postural support available.

Figure 3

What if my child has a cast?

If your child has a cast, a car seat that has enough room to fit the cast will be needed. Your child may be able to use the current car seat - but make sure to try it before you leave the hospital. If the cast prevents your child from sitting, you may need a car bed *(Figure 1)* or child restraint made for casts *(Figure* 3). Ask your child's medical team if there is a adaptive car seat loan program.

When can my child ride in a booster seat?

Use a booster seat after your child outgrows his car seat with a 5-point harness. This is usually when a child weighs about 65 pounds and is about 49 inches tall. A belt-positioning booster seat *(Figure* 4) will lift up your child so the vehicle seat belt fits properly and will make your child safer in a crash. Never use a booster with a lap only seat belt.

Figure 4

When will my child be ready to use a seat belt?

Your child must sit all the way back against the vehicle seat without slouching, with knees bending easily over the edge of the seat, and wear the lap-and-shoulder seat belt flat and snug on the upper thighs and between the neck and shoulder. This is usually when a child is between 8-12 years old and is over 57 inches tall.

What if my child uses a wheelchair?

If possible, your child should ride in the appropriate restraint in your vehicle (car seat, booster seat, etc.) If your child is transported in the wheelchair on the bus or an accessible vehicle, be sure to use the appropriate wheelchair tie-downs and vehicle lap-and-shoulder belt. Face your child and wheelchair forward, remove trays, and do not recline/tilt more than 30 degrees. Please refer to the Ride Safe brochure - through the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI), which provides more information on how to use a wheelchair as a transportation device.

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