

Winter Car Seat Safety

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Winter is a tricky time of year for parents with children in car seats. As parents we want to keep our children warm on these cold bitter days; however, bulky winter coats and car seats are a very dangerous combination. In a car crash the fluffy padding in a coat immediately flattens out from the force, leaving extra space under the harness. A child can slip right through and be thrown from their seat.

Here are some tips to help find a balance between keeping our little ones warm and safe:

For infants:

- Dress the infant as if they were going to be indoors, you may add a thin fleece jacket over the top.
- Put them in their infant carrier.
- Secure the harness straps nice and snug, remember if you can pinch the material together between your thumb and finger it's too loose.
- Top them off with a hat and some blankets over the top of the harness straps.

For toddlers and preschoolers:

- Dress the child comfortably and put on their coat, hat, and gloves for their walk out to the car.
- Take off the coat and buckle the child snugly in the harness straps.
- Put the coat on over the child. They can put their arms in the sleeves backwards. Or use blankets.

For Parents:

- Get an early start. Start your car and let it warm up before you are ready to leave.
- Pack an emergency bag for your car. Keep extra blankets, dry clothes, hats and gloves, and some non-perishable snacks in your car in case of an emergency.

Here is a simple way to check if your child's coat is too big to wear under their harness:

1. Put the coat on your child, sit them in the child seat and fasten the harness. Tighten the harness until you can no longer pinch any of the harness webbing with your thumb and forefinger.
2. Without loosening the harness, remove your child from the child seat, Take the coat off and put your child back in the car seat and buckle the harness straps, which are still adjusted as they were when he was wearing the coat.

3. If you can now pinch the webbing between your thumb and forefinger then the coat is too bulky to be worn under the harness.

Taking a few extra minutes to ensure your car seat is secure and there is nothing bulky between the child and the straps is well worth your child's life. You can then travel with peace of mind.

For more information go to:

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/on-the-go/Pages/Winter-Car-Seat-Safety-Tips.aspx>

<https://saferide4kids.com/blog/winter-coats-and-car-seats/>