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Safer Technology Changes Child Passenger Best Practices

Bismarck, N.D. - Of the approximately 10,500 births in North Dakota every year, about 3,500 are to first time parents. One of many new things parents should learn is how to properly use their baby's car seat. Whether new to parenting or not, reaching all parents and caregivers with best practice information regarding child passenger safety is important to protect children from their number one cause of death and severe injury - motor vehicle crashes.

Child restraint technology is the best it's ever been, and because of that, best practice recommendations change due to new technology that provides better protection. In the fall of 2018, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) revised their current recommendations to keep up with the current child restraints on the market.

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) recommends caregivers follow the most recent updates from the AAP when transporting children in vehicles:

- Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible, until they reach the highest size limits allowed by the manufacturer.
- Children who have outgrown the rear-facing size limits for their car seat should use a forward-facing car seat with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest size limits allowed by the manufacturer.
- Children whose size limits are above the forward-facing limit for the car seat should use a belt-positioning booster seat until the vehicle lap and shoulder seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.
- When children are old enough and large enough to use the vehicle seat belt alone, they should always use lap and shoulder seat belts for optimal protection. The lap belt must lie snug across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt should lie snug across the center of the chest.
- All children younger than 13 years should be restrained in the rear seat of a vehicle for optimal protection.

In addition to choosing the right child restraint, parents and caregivers should carefully read car seat instructions to ensure correct use and reduce misuse. For additional information about child passenger safety, including dates of local car seat check-ups, visit the website at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/injuryprevention/childpassenger> or call 800.472.2286.

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