

Car Safety

It's important for everyone to be safe when riding in a vehicle. People with autism sometimes feel uncomfortable staying seated in a car seat or with a seatbelt fastened throughout their trip. Here are some helpful tips:

- Allow time for a child to get used to the car seat before he/she has to use it. Start with the car seat in the house, gradually move it to the car, and then introduce short rides. You can also personalize the seat by adding favorite stickers and graphics.
- Plan ahead if you are going on a long trip or when traveling in an unfamiliar car. You might start by teaching the rules of riding in a car. Use picture stories to explain appropriate behavior.
- Most cars are equipped with child safety locks. Always keep the safety locks on. When riding in someone else's car, make sure their safety locks are on, as well.
- Some people with autism simply do not like to be restrained and will try to unfasten car seat buckles and safety belts. The Automotive Safety Program lists adaptive or specialized restraints that may be helpful. Visit their link: <http://preventinjury.org/index.asp>
- Alert other drivers by getting an autism awareness ID magnet for your car.
- Create a travel pack that is only used while traveling. Fill it with favorite toys, books, and activities (these can include a portable DVD player or game system).

- Give reinforcement for appropriate travel behavior. Review expected behavior and associated reinforcers. For example, reinforce staying seated with seatbelt/car seat buckles fastened. The reinforcer can be given every time you get to a stoplight if the person has followed the rule. If stickers are used as a reinforcer, provide a sticker book or allow the individual to decorate his/her seat, or allow him/her to pick a reward from the travel kit. Be consistent by making sure everyone who travels with the individual follows the same plan.



- If the person does get out of his or her seat, pull over to the side of the road to a safe area to re-buckle. When possible have someone sit next to him or her to verbally, visually or physically prompt appropriate behavior. Gradually reduce the amount of prompting needed.
- Always make sure that the safety seat fits your child correctly. The type of car seat your child needs depends on his or her size and the type of vehicle you have. The American Guide of Pediatrics has a complete guide for families on their site: <http://www.aap.org/family/carseatguide.htm#>

www.childrens-specialized.org/KohlsAutismAwareness

For more information about this program contact: KohlsAutismAwareness@childrens-specialized.org



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