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Parents Still Making Five Common Mistakes When Using Car Seats

Note to Parents: Give Child Car Seats an Annual Checkup

Fort Myers, FL – Parents are making five critical, but fixable, mistakes when using car seats, according to new data announced today by Safe Kids Worldwide and the General Motors Foundation. With so many safety features now available in both cars and car seats, parents are urged to make sure their kids are getting every advantage by taking the time to do a 15-minute at-home annual checkup.

Seventy-three percent of car seats are not being used correctly. To find out why, Safe Kids analyzed data from more than 100,000 car seat inspections done by certified technicians conducted through its Buckle Up Program, a national initiative established in 1997 by Safe Kids and supported by General Motors and the General Motors Foundation to keep children and families safe in and around cars. Some findings proved that progress is being made, including that 98 percent of children arrived at car seat inspections in the back seat and 98 percent of the children were using some type of restraint.

Yet, the data revealed that parents and caregivers still have some work to do to ensure their children are restrained properly. Five safety steps every parent should take include keeping their children in rear-facing car seats for as long as possible, ideally until age two, selecting the correct seat for the weight, height or age of the child, tightening the harness enough and knowing when to let kids ride in the front seat.

“Correctly used child safety seats can reduce the risk of death by as much as 71 percent,” said Charlene Gardner, Safe Kids Lee/Collier Counties. “Engineers are working hard to ensure cars and car seats are designed to keep kids as safe as possible. But it’s up to every parent to take full advantage of these innovations by making sure car seats are used and installed correctly. Safe Kids and the General Motors Foundation are teaming up to show them how.”

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death to children ages 1 to 13. In a nationwide effort to educate parents about the importance of car seat safety during Child Passenger Safety Week (September 16-22), Safe Kids and the General Motors Foundation are asking every parent to take 15 minutes for an at-home car seat checkup using the Safe Kids downloadable checklist.

Car Seat Checkup Checklist

- **Right Seat.** This is an easy one. Check the label on your car seat to make sure it’s appropriate for your child’s age, weight and height. Like milk, your car seat has an expiration date. Just double check the label on your car seat to make sure it is still safe.
- **Right Place.** Kids are VIPs, just ask them. We know all VIPs ride in the back seat, so keep all children in the back seat until they are 13.
- **Right Direction.** You want to keep your child in a rear-facing car seat for as long as possible, usually until around age 2. When he or she outgrows the seat, move your child to a forward-facing car seat. Make sure to attach the top tether after you tighten and lock the seat belt or lower anchors. Continue to use a booster seat until your child properly fits in the seat belt, usually when they are between the ages of 8 and 12.
- **Inch Test.** Once your car seat is installed, give it a good shake at the base. Can you move it more than an inch side to side or front to back? A properly installed seat will not move more than an inch.

- Pinch Test. Make sure the harness is tightly buckled and coming from the correct slots (check car seat manual). Now, with the chest clip placed at armpit level, pinch the strap at your child's shoulder. If you are unable to pinch any excess webbing, you're good to go.

The checklist takes only 15-minutes to complete and provides important tips that will help parents ensure their car seat is used and installed properly.

“There is nothing more important than the safety of our children, and we're encouraged by the progress that is being made,” said Mike Robinson, Vice President, Sustainability and Global Regulatory Affairs for General Motors. “To ensure that our children – our most precious cargo – are safe in cars, we recommend parents take 15 minutes to check their child's car seat annually. Our children visit the doctor every year for an annual checkup, we need to give their car seats an annual checkup, too. A quick home checkup could save a life.”

For parents who want additional assistance, Safe Kids will host more than 500 car seat inspection events across the country throughout September. Locally you can schedule an inspection for September 15 at Catholic Charities 4235 Michigan Ave. Link Fort Myers from 11:00am-2:00pm or September 22 at Estero Bay Chevrolet 10640 Chevrolet Way Estero from 11:00am-2:00pm.

Parents can bring their car, car seat and child to an event in their area. Certified child passenger safety technicians will be available to provide one-on-one “hands-on” help with installation. In addition, Safe Kids Buckle Up events will continue throughout the year. Parents and caregivers can locate an event in their community by visiting the Safe Kids website at safekids.org.

About the General Motors Foundation

Since its inception in 1976, the GM Foundation has donated hundreds of millions of dollars to American charities, educational organizations and to disaster relief efforts worldwide. The GM Foundation focuses on supporting Education, Health and Human Services, Environment and Energy and Community Development initiatives, mainly in the communities where GM

operates. Funding of the GM Foundation comes solely from GM. The last contribution to the GM Foundation was made in 2001. For more information, visit www.gm.com/gmfoundation.

Safe Kids Lee/Collier Counties, whose lead organization is The Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida at Lee Memorial Health System, is part of Safe Kids USA and Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations whose mission is to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. More than 600 coalitions and chapters across the U.S. and the more than 20 member countries across the globe bring together health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, governments and volunteers to educate and protect families. For more information, visit www.SafeKidsLeeCollier.org.

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