

## New booster seat regulations will improve safety for BC kids

Car crashes kill and injure more BC kids than any other cause. Thankfully, booster seats can help put a stop to this. A properly used child safety seat lowers a child's risk of death in a crash by 71% and the risk of serious injury by 67%.

**W**ith the support of stakeholders like the BC Medical Association, the provincial government has updated the Motor Vehicle Act regulations on booster seats. The new laws went into effect 1 July 2008. The changes improve safety for kids traveling in vehicles by making sure they stay in a booster seat until they are the right size, or age, to use only a seatbelt.

Prior to these changes, child seat laws in BC were last updated in 1985. The old laws required the use of a child seat for kids up to 18 kg (40 lbs). Most kids reach this weight by the time they are 4 or 5 years old.

### Overview of new regulations

- Infants are to be secured in a rear-facing infant seat away from an active frontal air bag until at least 12 months old and 9 kg (20 lbs).
- Children at least 1 year old and 9 kg (20 lbs) to at least 18 kg (40 lbs) are to be secured in a child seat.
- Children at least 18 kg (40 lbs) are to be secured in a booster seat, up to their ninth birthday or 145 cm (4'9") tall, whichever comes first.
  - In a booster seat in a seating position equipped with a lap/shoulder seatbelt, or
  - In a booster seat in a seating position with a lap belt, if lap/shoulder seatbelt is not available.

Thanks to research over the last 22 years, we now know that 4- and 5-year-old kids are too small to use only a seatbelt. Seatbelts are designed for an adult's body, and alone they don't properly fit or protect a child in a crash. Booster seats keep kids safe by boosting them up to make the seatbelt fit properly.

With this in mind, BC's new booster seat regulations require the use of child seats for kids up to the age of nine, unless they first reach 145 cm (4'9") tall.

The new regulations include a few exceptions, such as children traveling in taxis and emergency vehicles. As well, there is an exception for children who can't fit in a child seat for medical or physical reasons. In cases like this, the driver must have a medical certificate issued for the child by a medical practitioner for the exception to apply.

To make sure drivers get the message, ICBC and the provincial government have created an advertising campaign promoting the benefits of booster seats. Ads are now appearing in daily newspapers around the province. In September, ICBC is distributing posters and growth charts featuring the same ad to all BC elementary schools.

The BCMA played a key role in reviewing child safety seat regulations, and we are asking doctors to help with the transition over the coming months. Please remind your patients they must use a child safety seat every time a child travels in their vehicle. While ICBC is committed to making our roads safer, we need everyone



**As of July 1st the law surrounding booster seats has changed.**

Your kids need a boost when you give them a lift, right up until they're 4'9" or 9 years old. It not only reduces the risk of serious injury or death by nearly 60%, but as of July 1st, 2008, it's the law. To learn more, visit [icbc.com](http://icbc.com).

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to do their part to reduce crashes and save lives.

If you have any questions about the new child seat regulations, please call the Child Passenger Safety toll-free information line at 1 877 247-5551.

—Sonny Senghera  
ICBC Road Safety