

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for having me here today. My name is Kim Moldowan and I am a CRST, Children's Restraint Systems Technician, certified with the Child Passenger Safety Association of Canada. I help parents and caregivers ensure that their car seats are installed and being used properly. Sadly, approximately 90% of car seats are being used incorrectly. I am passionate about keeping children safe in vehicles. Currently I am training the nurses on the maternity floor at Richmond Hospital, educating new safe baby foster parents, and working with the RCMP as we begin road side checks.

A major problem parents face with child passenger safety is a lack of education. There are limited resources out there for parents to learn about car seats and the resources that do exist are difficult to find. It is my hope that the City of Richmond will take more of an interest in child passenger safety to help educate parents on best practices. As most of us know, car crashes are the number one cause of death and injury of children in Canada. These fatalities and injuries can be greatly reduced if parents become more aware of how to properly restrain their children.

My goal today is to briefly talk about some common mistakes parents are making with their children in vehicles and to make you aware that not only parents, but organizations such as the police and fire departments, hospitals, health units, etc. can become certified technicians or have an info session from a local car seat technician like myself.

These are the top misuses we see frequently.

- Seat not tightly secured to the vehicle moving more than an inch in any direction
- Harness not snug, doesn't pass pinch test
- Chest clip not at armpit level
- Not anchoring the tether strap for forward facing seats
- Wrong angle of infant seat(should be 45 degree angle for neck and head support
- Seat belt routed through wrong belt path of the infant/child restraint
- Harness straps through incorrect slots of the infant/child restraint
- Using recalled or otherwise unsafe seats( restraints older than 10 years or beyond the manufacturers expiry date, or previously in a vehicle at the time of a crash)

Also a major issue we see as techs is children being moved to the next stage too soon. Children should remain rear facing as long as possible, at least until a minimum of age two. Children should remain in a 5 point harness until around age 6 because this is when most are developmentally ready for a booster. Children often need to use a booster seat until age 10-12 because this is roughly the age that they are able to fit the adult seat belt without using a booster.

Another thing I see personally as a tech here in Richmond is that many children are using the adult seat belt too soon and are at risk of severe injuries in a crash. Doctors call these injuries "seat belt syndrome," and they include injuries to the head, neck, spinal cord and internal organs.

Without a booster seat, the lap belt rides up on a child's belly and causes internal injuries in a crash. When a shoulder belt doesn't fit correctly, it will be uncomfortable and a child will unsafely place it behind his or her back or tuck it under the arm causing injuries to the head, neck and spinal cord in a crash.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and serious injury for children in Canada. Using a booster seat correctly provides 60% more protection over a seat belt alone.

In conclusion my hopes for Richmond families is to provide regular on going city sponsored car seat checks and education clinics. Also a better way for families to recycle expired or damaged seats rather than placing them at the curb to be picked up and reused by another family, and finally a program set up for needy families to obtain a car seat or booster seat when they cannot afford one.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about this very important safety information.