Children with cerebral palsy may have positioning needs that can affect travel. This brochure answers some questions you may have about transporting your child.
How long should my child ride rear-facing?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends you keep your child rear-facing as long as possible until they reach the maximum height and weight for the car seat they are using. Since some children with cerebral palsy have poor muscle control, riding rear-facing helps support their entire body and protects them better from injury, especially to the spine. Most new rear-facing only and convertible car safety seats (Figure 1) allow children to ride rear-facing up to 40 or 50 pounds.

What car seat should I use when I turn my child around?

Use a forward-facing car seat that has a 5-point harness until your child outgrows the maximum height or weight allowed by the manufacturer. Many forward-facing car safety seats allow children to remain in a harness system up to 65 pounds.

Some car seats have a built-in recline or semi-recline (Figure 2) feature that may be beneficial for positioning your child. A child passenger safety technician may be able to give you information about car seats with multiple recline options. You can find a technician in your area by visiting cert.safekids.org and clicking on “Find a Tech”.
What if my child has trouble sitting up or cannot hold up her head?

If your child fits well in a conventional car seat (rear-facing or forward-facing) and needs only minimal additional support, you might be able to place rolled blankets or towels along the side of your child’s head or trunk to prevent your child from falling side to side - if allowed by the manufacturer of your car seat (Figure 3). Never put anything behind your child or under the harness.

If your child needs more support for his neck, a soft cervical neck collar (Figure 3) could be used to help prevent his head from falling forward. A hard collar should be removed during travel.

Never recline the vehicle seat more than allowed by the vehicle manufacturer.

What if my child is too big for the car seats at the store?

Some children with cerebral palsy outgrow conventional car seats but continue to need additional support due to difficulty holding their body and head up. Your child may need a large medical car safety seat (Figure 4). Large medical seats have harnesses for weights as high as 115-130 pounds and offer a variety of accessories, such as head support pads that may meet your child’s unique positioning needs.

It is important to work with your child’s medical team to determine the best large medical seat for her. Large medical seats are usually ordered following a therapist evaluation through a local durable medical equipment vendor. Insurance or, in some states, Medicaid may cover the cost if proper documentation is provided.
My child has outgrown her large medical car seat. When she is buckled up in a seat belt, she leans to the side or falls over. What should I do?

Your child may be able to use the Churchill (Figure 5), an adaptive booster with a positioning vest for larger children who cannot sit up and weigh 44-175 pounds. For more information, visit eztether.com.

The Convaid Carrot 3 CRS or Convaid 3 Booster might also be an option. The Carrot 3 CRS and Carrot 3 Booster have recline options that may allow for improve head and trunk positioning during transportation. For more information, visit etac.com

What if my child has casts because of surgery or botox?

Your child will need a car seat that has enough room to fit the cast. Your child might be able to use his own car seat but make sure to try it before you leave the hospital. If the cast prevents your child from sitting, your child may need a adaptive child restraint. Ask your child’s nurse if there is a adaptive car seat program in your area that can help find the right restraint for your child (Lay Down EZ-ON vest, Wallenberg, & Quokka are potential options).

What if my child has pain or pressure areas on her skin when she rides in a car seat?

Contact your doctor or rehabilitation therapist to help you determine what is causing the pressure or pain.

Your child may need a different car seat that fits better, may need to be repositioned in her car seat, or need a seat that offers more padding.

Remember, do not add extra padding behind your child’s back or under her bottom. Your child’s car seat might not work as intended in a crash.
What if my child uses a wheelchair?
If your child is transported in her wheelchair on the bus or the family vehicle, you can find a detailed brochure at travelsafer.org, describing how to use a wheelchair as a transportation device.

Where should I put medical equipment in the car?
Place medical equipment such as apnea monitors and oxygen tanks on the floor of the vehicle wedged with pillows, foam, or blankets (if allowed by the vehicle manufacturer - as they may interfere with advanced airbag sensors). Equipment can also be buckled in unused seat belts. There are no straps or belts specifically made for securing equipment in a vehicle.

When can my child ride in the front seat?
The back seat is the safest place for all children 12 years old and under, even if your car does not have an airbag.

How should my child ride in a school bus?
Preschool-age children who weigh less than 40 pounds should use a car seat on a school bus. Talk with the school about your child’s transportation needs. Make sure transportation staff are included in her IEP (Individual Education Plan). She may need to ride in a school bus specific restraint (Figure 6), a large medical seat, or potentially in her wheelchair.

![Figure 6](image)

How can I be sure my child is buckled up correctly?
Always read and follow the directions that come with your car seat and your vehicle owner’s manual. You can find a certified child passenger safety technician who is trained in Safe Travel for All Children/adaptive transportation at cert.safekids.org. Click on “Find a Tech”. In the CPS Technician search form, make sure to click “Special Needs” in the Extra Training field. If there is not someone trained in adaptive transportation in your area, please call 800-755-0912 for further assistance.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
National Center for the Safe Transportation of Children with Special Health Care Needs
Indiana University School of Medicine
800-755-0912
preventinjury.pediatrics.iu.edu

Inclusion of products in this brochure does not imply endorsement.

Figure 2 source: www.gracobaby.com
Figure 5 source: www.eztether.com
Figure 6 source: www.imminet.com