Infants born prematurely or with low birth weight may have additional needs that can affect how they travel. This brochure answers some questions you may have about transporting your infant.
What car seat is best for my baby born prematurely?

A car seat that meets federal safety standards and fits your small baby is best. Your infant should fit in the weight and height requirements of the car seat. Choosing a car seat that has a smaller harness and many harness slots may fit your infant better. The distance from the lowest set of harness slots to the bottom of the child seat should be short enough so that the harness is at or below the baby’s shoulders (*Figure 1*). The distance from the crotch strap to the back of the seat should be short enough so that the baby’s bottom is held back against the car seat and does not slide forward (*Figure 1*).

The harness should be positioned at or below your baby’s shoulders and the chest clip positioned at armpit level. You know the harness is tight enough if your fingers and thumb slide off the harness when you pinch the webbing at your child’s shoulder (*Figure 2*).
My baby’s head and body lean to the side when in her car seat. What can I do to make her fit better?

Most car seats come with built-in head supports or infant inserts for smaller babies that have been crash-tested for use with that particular car seat (Figure 3).

If your baby needs more support for her head or trunk, you can use a rolled blanket or towel along each side of your child’s body (Figure 4) - if allowed by the manufacturer. You can also place a rolled washcloth or diaper between the crotch strap and your baby’s diaper to help keep her bottom against the back of the seat and prevent slouching forward (if allowed by the manufacturer).

Never use an infant insert, head support insert, or any padding that does not come with your specific car seat. There are no federal safety standards for these products (Figure 5).
I was told that my baby needs to be observed in a car seat before we can leave the hospital. What does this mean?

Some infants born prematurely experience breathing problems when they are sitting semi-reclined in a car seat. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants born prematurely or with some other medical conditions be observed for breathing-related problems before they are discharged from the hospital nursery (Figure 6).

Ask your baby’s doctor or nurse if your baby needs to be observed in her car seat before hospital discharge. Often this screening is called a "Car Seat Challenge" or "Car Seat Tolerance Screening".
How should my baby travel if she has breathing-related problems?

If your baby has problems with breathing, heart rate, or oxygen levels when sitting in a car seat, she may have to travel flat in a car bed that meets federal safety standards. A car bed allows your baby to lie down when she travels. Check with your baby’s doctor or nurse about which car bed is best for your infant and where you can get one (Figures 7, 8, 9). If your baby needs a "Car Seat Tolerance Screening" in the conventional car seat...your baby should be re-screened in the car bed prior to discharge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Car Bed</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Height</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Websites</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angel Ride (Fig. 7)</td>
<td>Less than 9 pounds</td>
<td>Up to 21.5 inches</td>
<td>317-409-0148</td>
<td>eztether.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dream Ride SE (Fig. 8)</td>
<td>5-20 pounds</td>
<td>26 inches or less</td>
<td>800-544-1108</td>
<td>na.doreljuvenile.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope (Fig. 9)</td>
<td>4.5-35 pounds</td>
<td>Up to 29 inches</td>
<td>317-409-0148</td>
<td>eztether.com</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If my baby has to travel in a car bed, when will she be able to use a rear-facing car seat?

If your baby is using a car bed, your physician may consider scheduling "Car Seat Tolerance Screening" or "Sleep Study" in her rear-facing car seat to measure her heart rate, breathing, and oxygen levels within several weeks after discharge. This screening might be done at home (oxypneumocardigram), at the hospital (a polysomnogram), or at an outpatient clinic by direct monitoring of the heart rate, breathing, and oxygen levels when in the car seat.

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.
Other considerations when traveling with your infant born prematurely or your low birth weight baby:

- Minimize travel
- Travel with an adult in the back seat to observe your baby
- Never place your car seat in front of an airbag
- Only use your car seat for travel
- Never leave your child unattended in a car seat in or out of the vehicle

Are there any car seats for infants who weigh less than 5 pounds?

Yes. Some infant seats do not have a minimum weight or have a minimum weight of 3 pounds or 4 pounds. It is best if your baby’s weight is within the range required by the manufacturer of the car seat.

How can I be sure my baby 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.