



Is Your Child Safe? - Would You Bet Their Lives On It?

Anyone who has ever tried to put a child's car seat in a vehicle knows that anxious feeling of doubt about whether they've done it right? Here's how two moms help keep kids safe and parents informed when it comes to car seats.

Columbia, MD ([PRWEB](#)) December 23, 2004 -- Most of us put our kids' lives at serious risk every day and don't even know it. If you have children who are in car seats, chances are high—very high—that your car seat is not installed correctly, or your child is not properly strapped in to the seat, even if you've followed the directions.

According to 2004 statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA*), 86% of all car seats are installed incorrectly. Surprisingly, this is an improvement over a year ago, when the statistic was as high as 98%. Each year, over 250,000 children are injured in car accidents. It's scary to think that 86% could have been safer.

That's where two moms from Maryland have made a difference. Kit Orloff and Michelle Boucher, owners of Baby Outfitters, an upscale baby boutique and mothers of toddlers, decided to become advocates for the safety of babies and children in cars, as well as educators to parents just like themselves who are concerned and interested in making sure their kids are safe. Orloff and Boucher are both NHTSA Certified Safety Seat Technicians and have installed hundreds of car seats over the past few years. And yes, they've seen it all!

"We've seen infants in front seats, children strapped in properly without the seat being attached to the car, seats turned backwards, and other very disturbing things," notes Boucher. But it may not be for a lack of trying on the parents' part. "It's so difficult to imagine that car seats can be dangerous," Boucher explains, "especially when you've read the directions and think you've put the seat in the right way. But directions can be difficult to understand and incomplete without knowledge of your vehicle's safety features.

For example, not all seats fit the same in each vehicle. "Car seats are crash tested on a bench seat at 30 miles per hour," explains Orloff. "However, they aren't tested in every type of vehicle. A seat that fits perfectly in a 2003 Honda may not fit at all in a 1997 Isuzu when placed in the center back seat—the safest position for any child seat.

As of 2002, all vehicles and child safety seats have been equipped with the new LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) system, also referred to as Isofix. "Two anchors in the car receive two clips on the car seat. When installed properly, this system is supposed to make it easier to secure a car seat in a vehicle. But, as Orloff notes, there are always extenuating circumstances. "Many car seats just don't fit well in every vehicle and need additional items to make the seat fit properly without increasing the risk of danger to the child," she explains. "For example, some people use towels or even clothing to help position a seat with the intention of making the seat fit snugly. In fact, this is not recommended because these items do not hold up over time, and can cause the seat to become loose and more dangerous."

So how can parents be sure their kids are safe in their car? "Read all manuals," explains Orloff, including your car's manual. If you have questions, call the car seat manufacturer or your car dealer and get answers. When purchasing your car seat, ask the retailer if they know how to install the seat. If they can't, they should



give you a referral. Guidelines for properly installing a car seat can also be found at www.baby-outfitters.com and at www.nhtsa.gov. Basically, you should not be able to move the seat more than one inch in any direction when you pull on it at the belt path. This rule of thumb is just one of several used to ensure your child's safety.

You can also contact a local fitting station where certified technicians like Orloff and Boucher will check and install your seats with you, teaching you exactly how to do it yourself. These places are getting harder to find because so many of the fire stations and other locations that used to provide this service have lost the additional funding to support paying the technicians, explains Boucher. That's why we decided to make it an integral part of our regular business. To give access to this information to as many parents as possible.

Baby Outfitters provides safety seat checks twice a week and two Sundays each month. Inspections are free and installations are \$20. For less than the price of a tank of gas, you can make sure your kids are safe, says Orloff. And that piece of mind is priceless.

Baby Outfitters offers a national list of fitting station locations through their Car Seat Safety link on their web site at www.baby-outfitters.com. You can also contact them for an appointment at 410-884-1444.

For more information on car seat safety, visit www.baby-outfitters.com. *NHTSA offers current information on laws, requirements, and ratings for child safety seats as well as general information on traffic safety, vehicle equipment and research. They can be found at www.nhtsa.dot.gov.

Established in 2001, Baby Outfitters is a baby boutique specializing in providing the best car seats, strollers, clothing and travel items. Exclusive dealer of the Ice Pink and Ice Blue Runabout stroller, they also provide upscale baby products to the stars. Baby Outfitters is located at 6490 Dobbin Road, Columbia, MD 21045, and online at www.baby-outfitters.com.

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