

# Health Unit Media Release



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## Why Use a Booster Seat? On September 1, 2005, the use of booster seats became law in Ontario.

### Why did booster seats need to be legislated?

Fewer than 5 per cent of Canadian children age 5 to 9 use booster seats. Based on the size and weight of most children in this age range, the majority need the protection of a booster seat.<sup>1</sup>

**Why?** Seatbelts are designed for adult bodies; the lap and shoulder belts cross children's bodies in the wrong places. Seatbelts often make children uncomfortable, and therefore they tuck the shoulder belt behind their backs or under their arms.

Booster seats provide 60 per cent more protection than seat belts alone, and substantially reduce the risk of serious injury. In a crash, children in seat belts alone can suffer serious injuries to the head and face, internal organs, spine, and spinal cord. **Children in seat belts alone have four times the risk of a head injury, compared to children of the same age in booster seats.**<sup>2</sup>

### The new law

Children need to be in a booster seat if they are under 80 lbs and under 4' 9" and under 8 years of age. Once they meet any ONE of these three guidelines, they may legally sit in a seat belt. **To protect the child however, meeting both the height and weight guidelines are your best guide for deciding when to move up to the adult seat belt system.**

### Tips for parents:

- Buckle booster seats up when not in use, so they don't become a flying object in a crash.
- Child must be at least 40lbs to use a booster seat
- No PST will be charged on booster seats after September 1, 2005. No PST charged on car seats already.
- Read the labels: check weight limits and check seat belt requirements. Older versions of booster seats are only good up to 60lbs and allowed for use with lap belt only. If a shoulder lap belt is available it should be used.
- How high is the vehicle seat back? If the booster seat raises the child's head above the vehicle seat back, you need to purchase a high back booster seat.

For more information please contact the Health Unit at 1 800 660 5853 or the Ministry of Transportation for Ontario at 1 800 268 4686 or visit [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Safe Kids Week Campaign, 2004 Safe Kids Canada

<sup>2</sup> Booster Seat Use in Canada: A National Challenge, Safe Kids Canada, June 2004