

Dr. Nancy: Hi, happy Wednesday. Welcome to Dr. Nancy live. A couple of things before we get started today, I want to remind you about our coat drive we have going. You have until November 30 to get your coats in. So, if you have any coats that you've outgrown, your kids have outgrown, bring them in. We are going to donate them probably the first week in December. So, we are taking them all through 30 November.

Dr. Nancy: Today, we have a very special guest. We are doing a public service kind of announcement interview. We've asked Officer Jim from the Carmel Police Department to come talk to us about car safety. So, I want to welcome Officer Jim. Thank you for taking the time to do this. Talk to us about car safety.

Officer Jim: Okay. And specifically, car seats, right?

Dr. Nancy: Yes, car seats. Yes, I'm sorry, car seat safety. Thank you.

Officer Jim: In Indiana, any child eight years or under is required by law to be secured in a child restraint system, per the manufacturer's instructions. And then between eight and 16, they are required to be secured by a seatbelt or a child restraint system, as well. And then obviously, above 16, everyone is actually, required to wear a seatbelt.

Dr. Nancy: Let's start from the infants. Where should we put the seatbelt, or the harness? Where is that plastic thing, supposed to lay?

Officer Jim: There are many different kinds of child restraint systems. They can certainly be intimidating. They don't really need to be that intimidating, though. Once you actually use it and understand it, it's really not that bad. But there are several different kinds of restraint systems. You had mentioned starting with infants. Those would be rear facing. And those could either be infant only, maybe a specific carrier, maybe with a base that would be installed in the car, or just a carrier that you could use just the seatbelt to install it, as well.

Officer Jim: Even a convertible seat, which would start rear facing and then at a certain point in time, you could turn that seat around and use that to be forward facing, as well.

Dr. Nancy: Let me stop you there. Let's talk about that certain point in time. When is that? That's a big question.

Officer Jim: Absolutely. That is usually a big question and a common question we get is, "When can I turn that seat around?" Because it seems like a lot of parents think that there's a certain age that's kind of a rite of passage, where you can just turn that around. And that's really not the case. Our recommendation is to keep them rear facing as long as possible, because that is statistically the safest way to be when you're in a vehicle.

Officer Jim: I know the American Association of Pediatrics recently changed their recommendation officially to keep children rear facing until age 2. But again, we recommend as long as possible. So, that would be to what ever that manufacturer's recommendations are for the height and weight, to keep that seat rear facing. So, it could even exceed an age of two, if you go by the size and weight.

Dr. Nancy: Because there's different car seats for that hold different sizes, from what I understand, correct?

Officer Jim: Correct.

Dr. Nancy: So then, once they are turned front facing, let's talk about installation and how the car seat should be inside the car.

Officer Jim: Sure. And actually, we can back up a second. I know you had asked about for rear facing. So, I want to make sure we talk about that.

Officer Jim: For rear facing, not the installation, but for the straps when the child's actually in the seat, you want to make sure that those straps go into the back of the seat or carrier at or just below shoulder level. And then there's also the plastic clip you had mentioned, that kind of holds the front two straps together. That's either known as a retainer clip or a chest clip. Once that is clipped, you want to make sure that that's at armpit level for the child. The purpose of that clip is just to make sure those straps stay right where they are supposed to be, right over their shoulders.

Dr. Nancy: Right. Nice and snug, right?

Officer Jim: Yes. And as far as being snug, we use the fingertip test. I'll use my seatbelt that I have on here. So, as long as the strap is going across, and you want to take two fingers, and just run along that webbing. So, if you can't pinch any extra fabric, then that's tight enough. If you are able to pinch some fabric, that would be a little bit too loose, so you'll need to tighten that up.

Dr. Nancy: Okay. And if the babies turning blue, it's a little tight?

Officer Jim: That would be a little too tight, yeah.

Dr. Nancy: We just posted something today about wearing coats in a car seat, the big winter coats. What's your thoughts on that?

Officer Jim: The thing with coats is that you don't want to put a child in a seat with a big puffy jacket on. You can put that on over them after they are secure in the seat. Same with blankets and things like that. You don't want to use those when they are secured in the seat, or the straps. You want to secure them first, and then

you can just reverse that jacket and put it over them that way, if you need to keep them warm.

Dr. Nancy: Oh, that's a good idea.

Officer Jim: Wait and put it on afterwards.

Dr. Nancy: Right, okay. So, where do we go next in our car seat age? So, we go up to front facing.

Officer Jim: Sure. So, forward facing, again, that's going to be based on those manufacturer's recommendations again. When things flip around and go forward facing, it's pretty much the same. You'd be used to using the straps and the retainer clip, if you keep them in a harness forward facing. So, all that is the same, except for where you want the straps to go in the back of the seat. For forward facing, you wanted to be at shoulder level or actually, just above. That would be similar to a seatbelt that we wear.

Dr. Nancy: We had a question about wearing sweatshirts under there. Are those too bulky?

Officer Jim: That would kind of have to be case-by-case, I would say. Parents and caregivers would just have to use their best judgment at that point. You had mentioned the puffy jackets. You can get a feeling for when that might be a little bit too puffy or fluffy to know that it wouldn't keep the child secure.

Dr. Nancy: Right. So then, after the front facing, they get to go to the booster seat.

Officer Jim: Yes.

Dr. Nancy: What's the story on that?

Officer Jim: There's two types of booster seats that are specifically booster seats. That even a lot of the seats now that are forward facing, you can even remove those harnesses and use those as booster seats, as well. The belt-positioning boosters are ones that have maybe a piece of plastic or something that can hold that seatbelt a little bit lower as it goes across their shoulder. Again, that keeps it right where it needs to be, right across the shoulder.

Officer Jim: That's usually high back boosters, or the seats that can be forward facing, or a booster seat, as well. And then there's the regular booster that would just lift the child up a little bit higher, again, just to get that placement where you want that seatbelt to go right over their shoulder. If that backless booster that they would just sit on to lift them up like that, if that doesn't get them up high enough, there is usually another piece that's included with those that you can use as well, which attaches to that booster, and then goes up and it hooks the seatbelt and gets it right where it needs to go.

Dr. Nancy: What would you say the rules are on a booster seat, like the size? How long do they have to stay in the booster seat?

Officer Jim: There are some booster seats now that are rated even up to over 100 pounds.

Dr. Nancy: Oh, wow.

Officer Jim: Again, it's really not so much a certain weight or anything like that. When you get into a booster seat, it's really the height that is important. Because you need to make sure that seatbelt stays where it needs to be to keep them safe.

Dr. Nancy: So, we have a short 16-year-old, really short. Will they still have to be in a booster seat? It doesn't matter the age, right?

Officer Jim: Right. Well, technically, the law, 8 to 16 is a seatbelt or child restraint device. So, it would have to be up to the parent and caregiver. Maybe if an older child is a little bit shorter, the important thing is just that that seatbelt is where it needs to be.

Dr. Nancy: I see some parents tucking that shoulder belt behind them. That's a good thing, right?

Officer Jim: No, that's not a good thing for anyone, because that's not how they are designed to work.

Dr. Nancy: Right.

Officer Jim: Even a common thing with women, or maybe someone who's pregnant, we see that a lot. They take this strap and they'll tuck it behind them, or do something else, or under their arm, probably because it's not comfortable, or maybe some other reason. But that's really not what we recommend. It needs to be worn properly all the time.

Dr. Nancy: Okay.

Officer Jim: And that's what the law is too, actually.

Dr. Nancy: They get to go in the front seat at what age? My daughter couldn't wait.

Officer Jim: Yeah. The recommendation is that any child under 13 years old actually stays in a rear seat. So, I'm sure some of our older children wouldn't like that. But that's actually what's recommended.

Dr. Nancy: Alyse has a question. What's the height to move into the booster from a five-point harness?

Officer Jim: There's really not a set height or point where you transition from one or the other. It depends. There's so many different manufacturers out there. They might have different ratings for their child restraint system or car seat. For any installation and use of a car seat, you really need to default back to that specific manual for that manufacturer. And then on the installation side, the car seat manual as well as your vehicle manual.

Dr. Nancy: Is there anything else we are missing about car seat safety that you wanted to go over?

Officer Jim: Sure, yeah. I don't know if I mentioned it before, but in Indiana, it's estimated that three out of four seats are not either installed or used properly. That's really a frightening number. I think it's just because they are so intimidating. But they don't need to be. And we can help with that, too. We offer a service. If anybody wants to call the Carmel Police Department, we can schedule an appointment and come in.

Officer Jim: We have appointments on some weekday slots, as well as Sundays. We can come in and either just check the seat for you, if you just want to make sure everything's installed properly, or if you really have no experience with it, or maybe for a grandparent or someone else, seats and technology have changed a lot over time, so it might be something they're not used to either. We have a lot of families that come in altogether, and will check multiple cars, and help everybody understand how they work and get them installed properly, and make sure everything's right.

Dr. Nancy: We have one mom here, that her three-year-old likes to unbuckle the top strap a few minutes into the drive. Do you think that might be a good idea for her to get a "car seat safety" track and maybe have an officer reiterate?

Officer Jim: Certainly. We recommend if there's a child bring them along. We can make sure that they fit in it properly and measure and weigh them to make sure everything fits in with the recommendations for that seat. We can certainly, maybe talk to the child and emphasize how important it is to not do that.

Dr. Nancy: That's probably a good idea.

Officer Jim: Absolutely.

Dr. Nancy: We always need help backing up our rules sometimes.

Officer Jim: Helps to hear somebody else sometimes.

Dr. Nancy: That's true. Especially somebody in uniform.

Officer Jim: Common questions, if it's okay, that we usually get.

Dr. Nancy: Sure.

Officer Jim: One of them is "What is the best car seat out there to buy?" The best car seat is going to be one that is the right fit for the child based on their size and weight, that's going to be installed properly and used properly every time. Another thing we add in is that the family can afford it as well.

Officer Jim: The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration or NHTSA developed the safety standards but they don't certify each seat before they go to market. So they have the standards and they'll randomly spot check seats to make sure they do perform to their standards. But every seat should perform to the same standard.

Officer Jim: Some manufacturers advertise different bells and whistles and features in them but when it comes down to it any car seat that's out there should perform to the same safety standard during a collision.

Dr. Nancy: It's not really recommended that you buy a used car seat, right?

Officer Jim: Yes. That's something else that I wanted to bring up, too. If anyone would buy a used car seat the most important thing is that you know the history of it. If it's a family friend or another family member or someone that you trust to know that it hasn't been involved in an accident and has been cared for properly then that's a situation where it would be okay. But sometimes maybe some of the Facebook marketplace groups or other means to buy a used car seat, if you can't be certain of the history of it then we wouldn't recommend purchasing it and using it.

Dr. Nancy: We do have a question. Do all police departments check, or fire departments? Or is it just police departments?

Officer Jim: It actually depends. In Carmel it's the police department that handles that. Across the state and in other areas it could be the police or fire department. So definitely contact them, your local departments, and find out who does that. You could also do an internet search on there for car seat clinics or certified fitting stations.

Dr. Nancy: Okay. Anna wants to talk a little more about boosters and what height and weight are appropriate and not so much age for boosters.

Officer Jim: Okay. Generally, boosters would be maybe from age 4 and 40 pounds. But again, that's just a general age and weight range. It just depends. Every system is different and might fit the child differently too. So I can't say a set height and weight.

Dr. Nancy: Okay. Does anybody else have some questions? We have some viewers here which are asking questions which is great. Do you have any other frequently asked questions that you want to go over?

Officer Jim: Well while you're fueling some questions there I can talk about some of the other things that are important for installations. One of the things that, if you would come into the police department, that we would look at and talk to you about is placement-wise in the car. The center of the car would be the safest because that would be the furthest point from any side impact collision.

Officer Jim: But we also know you have to factor in convenience and other things. Like getting in and out of the car. Maybe an enclosed garage that your car is parked in and you just can't get that door open enough against the wall. Maybe if you take your child to a daycare facility or school where you have to get them in and out, you know? Which side is the curb on, do you want to get them out on a traffic side or would you rather get them out on a curb or sidewalk side? Those are all just different things that we would help to look at.

Officer Jim: Even if there's multiple kids that would be in seats in the car, sometimes they just can't fit next to each other. So there's different things that we would look at and play around with.

Dr. Nancy: Great, yeah. I didn't think about that one.

Officer Jim: For installation still, a real common question that we get is the latch system versus seatbelt installation. The latch system is the lower anchors and tethers for children. Those are the hooks that would come out the back of the seat and attach to the anchors that are attached to your car frame. The seatbelt installation, obviously you just use the seatbelt to install through the same path.

Officer Jim: We call it a belt path, where the seatbelt or latch straps would go through. If things are installed properly, each would perform the same in the event of a collision. So, latch or seatbelt. One's not really better than the other. They should perform the same if it's installed correctly. The important thing with latch is there is kind of an upper weight limit on that. Again, I sound like a broken record but you'll have to refer to the manual because each system is different with that. If it's not specifically listed in those manuals, in the system or car manual, then you assume that a combined weight of 65 pounds, with the seat and the child, would be the max weight limit for the latch system.

Dr. Nancy: Anna that should answer your question, right? She was asking about that. She was asking if it's safe for the high back booster, the latch system.

Officer Jim: Some high back booster that have latch and the purpose of it in that aspect is just to keep the seat in the correct place. So that's not really used for the safety aspect of it, it's just to keep the seat there. The seatbelt is really what would be used during a collision there.

Dr. Nancy: Okay, great.

Officer Jim: I saw another question pop up there about expiration dates. That was another thing that I wanted to hit on as well. Most systems do have an expiration date listed on them. Now that's not necessarily to say that the plastic expires or goes back. That might be part of it, but another part of it is to make sure that the seats and systems out there that are being used kind of conform to recent safety standards. Obviously they change over time so eight years is kind of a general rule of thumb. If there's no one listen then either six or eight years is what you would go by.

Officer Jim: But most systems now have that date on there and they keep getting longer, too as they make these seats to be able to be used longer.

Dr. Nancy: That's a lot different. I had my daughter 14 years ago so this is all kind of foreign to me.

Officer Jim: Another common question that we get is disposal of the seats, what do you do to get rid of it. So I'm going to make sure I talk about that too. Some stores have a drive or promotion, maybe once maybe twice a year, that if you bring in an old seat that is not being used anymore you can turn that in and get a coupon for a percentage off of a new purchase. So that's a good route to go. And if that's not going on at the time and you still want to get rid of that seat you can always contact your trash service and find out if they would take it to recycle.

Officer Jim: There were some recycle centers in the area that used to take them and would recycle them but unfortunately it seems like that's not really an option a lot anymore. So sometimes you just have to dispose of it in your regular trash. You would send it out. What we recommend if you do that and the seat isn't good anymore, maybe it's expired or involved in an accident, just cut the straps on it so that, maybe if someone else sees it, they don't take it to try to use it.

Dr. Nancy: That's a good idea.

Dr. Nancy: Jenny says that Target does the buy back a lot regularly.

Officer Jim: We don't want to promote any one certain store but that is one of the more popular ones that we know.

Dr. Nancy: Okay, that's good to know. Thanks Jenny.

Dr. Nancy: Well thank you so much. I appreciate you coming on and offering car seat safety tips for us. Any one last thing you want us to leave with?

Officer Jim: No, I don't think so. Like I said if you have any questions anybody at all if you live or work in Carmel or just in the area and you want to take advantage of that

service that we offer to have your seat inspected, or just want to talk about it in general please do that. If you want to schedule that you can call our regular administration number for the police department. That's 317-571-2500. You can also go to our webpage. That's [carmelpd.com](http://carmelpd.com). And we're also out there on Facebook and Twitter as well. Twitter we're @Carmel\_Police and Facebook, I think Facebook is just [Facebook.com/CarmelPD](https://www.facebook.com/CarmelPD) or @CarmelPD.

Dr. Nancy: Okay, wonderful. Well thank you. I know everybody's probably chomping at the bit about the hundred dollar give away too so what we're going to do this week, because this is a public service interview, we would like to get this out to as many people as possible. So I'm get your fingers ready. The first person to share this video will win 100\$ and we will announce the winner tonight after 6'o clock.

Dr. Nancy: Officer Jim thank you again for coming on with me today. It was great info and keep our streets safe.

Officer Jim: Absolutely. Thank you for inviting me.