



Under 13? **Backseat** **and Buckle up!**

What's the issue?

Car crashes are a leading cause of deaths and injuries among New York State tweens (8 to 12 year olds). Most tweens seriously injured or killed in crashes were not wearing seat belts. They are also more likely to get hurt in crashes when riding in the front seat.

What can parents do to keep tweens safe in the car?

- **Require tweens to ride in the backseat and wear seat belts every time.** No exceptions, even when riding in the car with other drivers or when the trip is short. Most crashes happen close to home. Wearing seat belts is not only for their safety – it's the law.
- **Make sure seat belts fit properly:**
 1. The lap belt should be snug and low across the upper thighs/hips.
 2. The shoulder belt should cross the chest and collarbone. Never let your tween put the shoulder belt behind the back or under the arm. Serious injuries can occur in a crash.
 3. Your child should be tall enough to sit up straight against the vehicle seat back and have legs bend over the edge.

Your child may need to use an approved booster seat if the seat belt does not fit properly.

What You Say Matters

Tween survey results indicate that parents have the most influence.
If your tween resists, insist.

- **Make sure your tween sits up straight.** Seat belts will not work properly if your child is slouching. If your rear seat reclines, keep it upright.
- **Make it easy and a habit.** To encourage buckling up in the backseat, let your tweens pick the radio station or play electronic games. Keep their belongings in the backseat with them.
- **Wait until everyone is buckled up before driving.**
- **Tweens should only ride with adult drivers.** Teen drivers are more likely to be involved in a crash, more likely to let tweens sit in the front seat, and less likely to insist on seat belts.

For more information, visit health.ny.gov/backseat

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**Department
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