**Road Trip Preparation**

Make sure your car is in good working order. For safe travels, have a tune up before setting off for a long road trip. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recommends that you have your tires, battery, belts, fluids, and air conditioner checked by a qualified mechanic. If you’re driving in a hot climate or towing a boat or trailer, follow vehicle manufacturer’s recommendation to service your vehicle.

Start the trip with plenty of rest and take regular breaks from driving during the trip. Before the start of a long family car trip, get a good night’s sleep. The NHTSA conservatively estimates driving while drowsy is a contributing factor in 100,000 crashes annually. Take a driving break about every 100 miles or 2 hours during long trips or share the driving with another adult and switch off every few hours. Drive only when well rested, and take breaks if you feel drowsy.

Wear a seat belt and correctly secure all children in an appropriate car seat or booster seat. Many car seats are installed incorrectly which increases the possibility of serious injury or death. Call 1-800-CAR-BELT or go to www.pakidstravelsafe.org to find a nearby location for a free car seat inspection.

Have an Emergency Kit. The NHTSA recommends an emergency kit that includes:

- Water
- Warm blankets
- A flashlight
- Jumper cables
- Flares
- Tools to change a tire
- A fully charged cell phone
- A first-aid kit

It's also a good idea to subscribe to a roadside assistance plan—just make sure you know where to call in an emergency and what kind of assistance your policy includes.

Check the backseat for safety. Turn on the child safety locks for windows and doors within reach of small children. Remove choking hazards, such as knobs that pop off easily or small objects and loose change that may have fallen between the seat cushions. Secure all loose objects (hard books, toys, etc.) in the car. When your vehicle is traveling at 40 miles an hour, so is everything else in it.

Avoid Driver Distraction. Texting and driving is one of the most dangerous forms of distracted driving. Avoid using your phone while driving. Even if you are hands-free, talking on the phone is dangerous. Talking on the phone and driving at the same time is like talking on the phone and watching TV—you’re going to miss something on one end or the other.

**Safely Transporting Children in RVs**

Recreational Vehicles (RVs) and summer travel with children do not always go well together. Essential planning includes determining how to safely transport children in car seats and booster seats.

RVs are not required to have rear occupant crash testing or based on weight, required to meet the Federal seat belt standards for rear seating positions. Since RV’s weigh more than 10,000 pounds, the limit for passenger vehicles required to meet seat belt requirements, seats in the rear cabin of the RV are not required to meet seat belt standards. This includes class A, C and C+ RVs. Class B RVs less than 10,000 pounds require seat belts for all rear seating.

People may have a false sense of security because of the size of an RV. But bigger is not necessarily safer with RVs. Before traveling with a child in an RV, learn the risks and choose the best alternative.

**Safety Tips for RV Travel**

- Safely accommodate all passengers in the appropriate seat belt, car seat, or booster seat every time you are driving.
- Choose an RV that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208.
- Car seats and booster seats are only approved for use on a forward-facing vehicle seat using either a seat belt or LATCH.
- Check in the cab of the RV for seating positions that are appropriate for installing car seats.
- Do not sit on side-facing or rear-facing benches when the RV is moving.
- Tow the RV or drive a second car.
- If there is not enough safe seating positions for everyone, bring a second vehicle or rent a tow-behind style RV.
- Use a towable RV (fifth wheeler, trailer, truck camper as pictured above) where children can ride properly secured in the towing vehicle. Make sure the driver is experienced with towing a trailer.
- Do not distract the driver who must focus on the road.
- RVs have a longer stopping distance, maneuver differently and take longer to avoid road hazards.
Keeping Car Seats Clean with Safety in Mind

Basics for Cleaning Car Seats

Read Car Seat Manufacturer’s Instructions
- Each car seat manufacture has specific instructions on how to clean their car seat. Be sure to read the manual before starting the cleaning process. Always follow the instructions provided by the manufacturer.

Maintain Car Seat Between Cleanings
- It is easier to keep a car seat clean if you routinely wipe down the car seat and vacuum crumbs or food that may be in the seat. Spot cleaning will make it easier to maintain the car seat and you will be less likely to have to take the seat apart do a deep cleaning.

Wash as Directed
When washing the seat pad or parts, follow the car seat manufacturers instructions. Use mild soap and water temperature as directed, not bleach or strong cleaners.
- Seat Pad: Confirm whether the seat pad is machine washable or must be cleaned by hand washing. Plan on air drying (unless permitted to use the dryer).
- Harnesses: Many harnesses cannot be immersed in water. Manufacturers recommend wiping clean with mild soap and water and allowing them to air dry.
- Car Seat Shell: Clean with mild soap and water and dry with a soft cloth. Take care not to damage any labels when cleaning the car seat.
- Never use an iron or high heat on car seat pads or harnesses. The high heat can damage the fibers.

Evaluate the Buckle
It is important to check the crotch buckle and clean as needed to ensure proper latching. Make sure it is functioning properly and is free of debris. To clean:
- Remove the buckle from the seat.
- Thoroughly rinse the buckle with warm water.
  - Do Not submerge the buckle webbing into the water.
  - Do Not soak the buckle or use soap, household detergents, solvents, or lubricants.
- Remove the buckle from the water and shake out any excess water. Allow the buckle to air dry.
- Test the buckle by fastening and unfastening each of the buckle tongues for both sides until you hear a click. If you don’t hear clicks for each buckle tongue you may need to repeat the cleaning process.
- Never use oil lubricants or chemicals in the buckle as it may compromise the way the buckle functions.

Allow Time for the Cleaning Process
- Proper cleaning takes time. Make sure you allow time for the padding, buckle and all the cleaned parts to fully dry. Air drying may take several hours or even a day. Make other arrangements for children who need to be transported during this time.
- Consider ordering replacement parts for any extra dirty messes when cleaning a part is not enough. Manufacturers offer replacement parts for their car seats. Contact customer service to determine if a replacement part is available for the car seat. Be sure to have the model number and manufacture date available when ordering replacement parts.

Reassemble Correctly
- Carefully follow the car seat instructions to assemble the car seat parts correctly.
- Check to make sure the harness is not twisted.
- Pull on the harness system to make sure it is securely installed.
- Take pictures of the seat and the assembly before taking it apart. The pictures will serve as a guide to put the car seat back together.

Use Caution when Using Extra Products
- Kids certainly make a mess in the car. Many parents purchase extra products to place between the vehicle seat and car seat to protect the vehicle leather or upholstery.
- Read the car seat instructions for guidance on protecting vehicle seats.
- Some car seat manufacturers have approved the use of select seat pads/protectors and/or towels.
- Contact the car seat manufacturer to see if they allow the use of products that did not come with their car seat.

Proper Installation
- Be sure to follow the car seat and vehicle manual instructions to correctly install the car seat in the vehicle appropriately for the child’s age, weight, height, and developmental needs. Contact a fitting station and/or attend a car seat check-up event if education on how to install the seat is needed.