

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**  
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**Crash Experts Find Car Seats Protect Overweight Kids, Too**  
*Follow Manufacturers' Guidelines to Keep Kids Safe*

**Philadelphia, Pa. Nov 28 2011** – Researchers at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia’s [Center for Injury Research and Prevention](#) studied nearly 1,000 1- to 8-year-old children involved in crashes and found no evidence of increased injury risk for children across a broad weight range. All of the children included in the study were properly restrained in the correct child safety seat or booster seat for their height and weight. The research also suggests that the current range of child safety seats and booster seats available today sufficiently accommodates a broad spectrum of children’s body sizes, including children with higher weights. The results are published online in the December issue of the journal [Pediatrics](#).

“Given that nearly 32 percent of children in the United States are categorized as overweight or obese, and motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for all children, we wanted to better understand how these two threats to children’s health interact,” explained lead author Mark Zonfrillo, MD, MSCE, an attending emergency physician at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. “This research should reassure parents that their only concern when it comes to car seat safety should be to follow the most recent [guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics](#).”

Current American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines, revised earlier this year, say that children should remain rear-facing until at least age 2 or until they reach the rear-facing height and weight limit for the car seat. Once forward-facing, children should stay in a five-point harness until they reach the manufacturer’s height and weight limit for that seat. They should then move to a belt-positioning booster seat, where they should remain until they are 4’9” tall, usually between ages 8 and 12.

“A good time to re-evaluate child safety seat needs is during your child’s routine medical visits. Compare your child’s weight and height measurements to the manufacturer’s acceptable ranges on the seat’s labels or instructions,” says Zonfrillo, who is the father of a toddler. “There’s no ‘one-size-fits-all’. If your older child moved to a booster seat at age 5, don’t necessarily assume it will be the same for his or her younger siblings.”

The authors also note the important role pediatricians and family physicians play in making sure their patients are well-protected in the car. During each visit where height and weight are evaluated, they should counsel parents to check their child’s measurements against their child’s safety seat. “Physicians should feel comfortable referring patient families with more complex

questions to their local child passenger safety technicians, who are trained and certified experts,” says Zonfrillo.

For more information on keeping children safe in the car at every age, visit [www.chop.edu/carseat](http://www.chop.edu/carseat).

#### **About The Center For Injury Research and Prevention**

The Center for Injury Research and Prevention at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia was established in 1998 to advance the safety of children and young adults through science. Operating with the central belief that children are not small adults, the Center's multidisciplinary team of researchers work to reduce injuries- the leading cause of death and acquired disability among the young. The Center's research is organized around three disciplines: epidemiology/ biostatistics, engineering, and behavioral science. Based on the research questions at hand, the Center draws from CHOP and University of Pennsylvania-based expertise in emergency medicine; pediatric trauma; surgery; nursing; social work; pediatric and adolescent medicine; epidemiology and biostatistics; bioengineering; psychology; behavioral science; communications; and health education. Center findings are published in scientific journals and translated into recommendations and education tools for parents, educators, policymakers and product manufacturers. For more information on the Center and its research initiatives, visit [www.chop.edu/injury](http://www.chop.edu/injury).

#### **About The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia**

The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia was founded in 1855 as the nation's first pediatric hospital. Through its long-standing commitment to providing exceptional patient care, training new generations of pediatric healthcare professionals and pioneering major research initiatives, Children’s Hospital has fostered many discoveries that have benefited children worldwide. Its pediatric research program is among the largest in the country, ranking third in National Institutes of Health funding. In addition, its unique family-centered care and public service programs have brought the 516-bed hospital recognition as a leading advocate for children and adolescents. For more information, visit [www.chop.edu](http://www.chop.edu).