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## **KIDS FOUND TO BE SAFER IN CRASHES WHEN GRANDPARENTS ARE BEHIND THE WHEEL**

PHILADELPHIA, PA July 18, 2011 – In the event of a crash, the risk of injury to children is significantly lower when driven by a grandparent versus a parent, according to a recent study conducted by researchers at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and published in the journal *Pediatrics*. Although crashes with grandparent drivers comprised 9.5 percent of the crashes studied, only 6.6 percent of the injuries occurred with grandparents behind the wheel. The study was funded by the Center for Child Injury Prevention Studies (CChIPS) at CHOP, an Industry/University Cooperative Research Center (I/UCRC) funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and 13 industry member companies.

Researchers examined crash data on 11,859 children from 2003 to 2007 from the Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS) study. In comparing grandparent drivers to parent drivers, nearly all child occupants were restrained at the time of the crash (98% versus 99%). However, 26 percent of grandparent drivers did not ensure that their child passengers were properly restrained in car seats or seat belts versus 19 percent of parent drivers, with 4 to 8-year-old passengers the most likely to be improperly restrained. After controlling for other factors, children involved in crashes with grandparents behind the wheel were half as likely to be injured as those driven by parents.

These findings are important since older driver age, especially 65 and up, has long been associated with increased risk of motor vehicle crashes and older adults are often called upon to transport their grandchildren. "With more baby boomers becoming grandparents, we were concerned about children in crashes with grandparents," says Fred Henretig, MD, lead author and an attending physician in CHOP's Department of Emergency Medicine. "Although the children in crashes with grandparents could be better protected if they were following best practices for using child restraints, we were surprised to find that there is something about grandparents' driving style with their 'precious cargo' in tow that provides a protective benefit for those children. If we can learn more about this style of driving, we can help drivers of all ages keep kids safe in cars."

While further research needs to be conducted to better clarify the protective effect of grandparent drivers, study authors believe they may drive more cautiously when transporting their grandchildren. Subsequent studies of grandparent driving practices while carrying grandchildren may help inform future child-occupant driving education guidelines for all drivers.

“With grandparents taking on a greater role in transporting their grandchildren, less optimal use of child restraints concerns us,” says Flaura Koplin Winston, MD, PhD, co-author of the study and co-director of CChIPS at CHOP. “It is vital that parents and grandparents continue to share child passenger safety knowledge and that grandparents have the same opportunity to receive the latest recommendations on how to properly restrain their grandchildren in cars as parents do.”

To help grandparents--and all drivers--keep kids safe in cars with optimal restraint use, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently updated its child passenger safety recommendations (found on [www.chop.edu/carseat](http://www.chop.edu/carseat)). In summary, they are:

- Children should ride in a rear-facing seat in the back of the car until age 2 or until they outgrow the rear-facing height and weight limit for the seat.
- Once children outgrow the rear-facing limits for their seat, they should ride in the back in a forward-facing car seat with a 5-point harness (until they outgrow the height and weight limits for the seat).
- When children outgrow a forward-facing seat, they should ride in a belt-positioning booster seat in the rear of the vehicle until they reach 4'9" in height (usually sometime between age 8 and 12).
- After that, children should ride in the rear seat using a lap and shoulder belt until age 13.

“Back when we were raising our children, the use of child restraint systems after 3 or 4 was rare,” says Dr. Henretig, grandfather to two toddlers. “It gives me peace of mind to know that today my two granddaughters are using child safety seats that are proven to protect them in crashes, on every trip.”

For more information about the study, visit [www.chop.edu/cchips](http://www.chop.edu/cchips).

### **About The Center for Child Injury Prevention Studies**

The Center for Child Injury Prevention Studies (CChIPS) at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) is a National Science Foundation Industry/University Cooperative Research Center (I/UCRC) that focuses exclusively on making children and adolescents safer. Through CChIPS, researchers from CHOP and The University of Pennsylvania work side by side with industry members to conduct translational research that is practical to industry. This synergistic collaboration between industry and academia creates an ideal environment to generate ideas for new research projects and to leverage shared expertise and resources. The CChIPS method applies the science of biomechanical epidemiology to the analysis of crash-related data. A unique and comprehensive approach, biomechanical epidemiology integrates the principles of engineering, behavioral science, and epidemiology into study designs.

### **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 <http://www.chop.edu>

**About Partners for Child Passenger Safety**

With the goal of making children safer in cars, CHOP and State Farm Insurance Companies® formed a unique industry/academic research partnership from 1997-2007 called Partners for Child Passenger Safety (PCPS). In PCPS, crashes involving children were identified and enrolled through crash claims reported to State Farm. Detailed interviews with drivers and in-depth data analyses conducted by CHOP researchers served to provide the nation with its only large-scale child-focused crash surveillance data system. Learn more about PCPS at [injury.research.chop.edu](http://injury.research.chop.edu).