



Car Seat Trial

What is a Car Seat Trial?

A car seat trial is an important screening to ensure that your baby can safely sit in their car seat without having any dangerous problems with their breathing, heart rate, or oxygen level. Car seats put babies in a semi-reclined position, which can be difficult for some preterm and special needs infants to tolerate. This is a practice test done a few days before discharge to see how your baby does before it is time for them to go home.

Who needs a Car Seat Test?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a Car Seat Trial for all babies born before 37 weeks or born weighing less than 5lb 8oz (2500 grams). Babies with other medical conditions who may not tolerate sitting in a semi-reclined position may also need this test.

How is the test done?

You will need to bring your baby's car seat to the hospital as it's important that they be tested in the same seat they will ride in after going home. The test is done preferably after the baby has eaten and has a clean diaper. Your baby will be secured into their car seat and the staff will closely monitor their breathing, heart rate, and oxygen levels for 90 to 120 minutes.

After the test

- If your baby passes the Car Seat Trial, you will still need to watch him or her closely when in a car seat. If your baby did not pass the test, the doctor may repeat the test in the same car seat on another day or do the test again in a different car seat.
- Only put your baby in their car seat to travel. Do not let your infant sleep in the car seat when not traveling.
- Learn about your baby's car seat. You must know how to properly position your baby in it and know the right way to install it in your car. The car seat should stay rear-facing until your baby is at least 2 years old.
- Avoid adding anything to the car seat that didn't come with it
- Avoid bulky clothing like snowsuits or coats when putting your baby in their car seat. This prevents the harness from being adjusted properly and the baby could be ejected from their seat if in a crash.
- You can go to a nearby car seat check location or contact your local fire department to make sure your child is safe in their car seat. Go to www.safekids.org/car-seat to find one near you.

If you have any questions, be sure to talk to your nurse or your child's doctor.