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What age are high back booster seats for

Eventually, your once teeny tiny child will outgrow their car seat. But that doesn't mean they are ready to travel in a car like an adult with only a seat belt. A booster seat helps the seatbelt fit your child properly and keeps them safe in case of a car crash. In fact, children are 60% safer in a booster seat as opposed to a seat belt alone. But since there is no one age that determines when a child can use a booster seat, it's not always clear when it's time to make the switch. See guidelines to make sure you don't switch too soon. When can a child start to use a booster seat? A child is ready for a booster seat when they have outgrown the height or weight limit of their 5-point harness car seat. This is usually when they reach over 65 pounds or 49 inches. You can check your car seat's manual for its height and weight limits and if it can be converted to a booster seat. There is no one age that means your child is ready to switch from a car seat to a booster seat. Generally, kids are between the ages of 5-9 when they begin to outgrow the weight limitations of a 5-point harness car seat. Before you make the move to a belt-positioning booster seat, make sure your child meets these requirements: Generally, kids weighing over 65 pounds are ready to switch to a booster seat. When your child reaches 49 inches (about 4 feet) tall. When you believe your child is mature enough to properly sit in a booster seat with the seat belt correctly positioned at all times. It's important not to rush the switch to a booster seat. If your child still fits the height and weight requirements of their car seat, that is their safest option. How do you install a booster seat? A booster seat is typically held in place by the child's weight and the vehicle's lap-and-shoulder belt. Some seats do use your car's lower anchors and LATCH system like a car seat. It's important to read the booster seat instruction manual before installing your child's booster seat. Your car's instruction manual can also help you determine how to properly and safely install the seat. If your car doesn't have headrests, you should use a high-back booster seat. Here are some important tips to follow when you install your child's booster seat: Always place the booster seat in the back seat. Always use a lap and shoulder seat belt with the booster seat. Place the booster seat flat on the vehicle seat. Have your child sit in the booster seat and pull the seat belt across your child's body to make sure the belt fits properly. The seat belt should rest low on the hips, not across the stomach. Across the chest, the belt should lie firmly in the middle of the child's shoulder. When can a child stop using a booster seat? Texas law requires that all children use a car seat or booster seat until they are 8 years old or 4 feet, 9 inches tall. Even if your child is 8 and it is legal for them to stop using a booster seat, if they are under 4 feet 9 inches tall, you should continue to use a booster seat to keep your child safe. When your child reaches the height requirement, the seat belt will fit them safely and comfortably. Children should always travel in the back seat of the car, never the front, until they are 13 years old. They should always have the seat belt on their chest, never around their back. The lap belt should rest against their hips, and the shoulder belt should rest in the middle of their shoulder. If it doesn't, you should keep using the booster seat. Do booster seats expire? Yes, car seats and booster seats do expire. That's because of wear and tear and changing regulations along with recalls and manufacturer testing. In general, car seats expire between 6 and 10 years from the manufacture date. Before you purchase a used booster seat or borrow one from a friend, check for a recall from the manufacturer's website. Safe Kids also maintains an ongoing list. If you can't find an expiration date on the bottom or back of the booster seat, you can also check the manufacturer's website for your booster seat brand and information on how to find the expiration date. Learn more Children's Health™ certified child passenger safety technicians can help you understand what car seat is right for your child and how to install it. Learn more about our car seat services. Stay current on the health insights that make a difference to your children. Sign up for the Children's Health newsletter and have more tips sent directly to your inbox. 9b30d65a-fa8-413e-a061-8b760ded6130 Vervywell / Brianna Gilmartin Many parents wonder if their tall young child is ready for a booster seat, or if there's an age requirement. It's easy enough to check the weight and height limits of various boosters to see if your little one will fit according to manufacturer instructions. But, many parents don't realize that there is also a maturity requirement to ride in a booster. Before deciding whether your child is ready to move on from a car seat to a booster, you must first understand the difference between the two. Car seats use a five-point harness to restrain the child. A booster seat position's the vehicle's seat belt across the child's torso and legs as a restraint. Booster seat age refers to the age of a child at which they are ready to move from a car seat to a booster seat. The appropriate age is generally at least 4 years old. Vervywell / Brianna Gilmartin If you can safely keep your child in a harnessed car seat for a while longer, do it. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that kids use a car seat until they reach the maximum height or weight for that five-point harness. This is usually not until at least age four, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Three-year-olds are not ready to ride in a booster seat, even if they fit within the manufacturer's height and weight guidelines. To sit in a booster seat, children should: Be mature enough to sit properly in the booster for the entire trip (no slouching, no leaning over, no messing with the seat belt)Have exceeded the height or weight limits on their harnessed car seatIdeally, be at least age 4 Many convertible and harness-to-booster car seats have harnesses rated to hold kids up to 65 pounds. In fact, children in the U.S. today can often stay in a harnessed car seat until age six or beyond. Thanks to advances in car seat safety technologies, four-year-olds that might have been moved into a booster 10 years ago can still safely ride in a rear-facing car seat. Even fairly tall children can remain rear-facing through toddler years and then switch to a forward-facing harness until kindergarten age. For most kids, even those in the 95th percentile for weight or height, there shouldn't be a reason to move to a booster before age 4. Any step up in car seats—from rear-facing to forward-facing, from the harness to booster—is actually a step down in safety. The 5-point harness spreads crash forces over more points on a child's body, lessening the potential force any one part of the body must take in a crash. While some high-back booster seats have a minimum weight of 30 pounds, kids should weigh at least 40 pounds before riding in any booster seat. From a practical standpoint, parents find that it is easier to keep the child sitting properly when in a car seat than in a booster; in a booster the child can unbuckle themselves more easily than in a car seat. They can also lean and slouch, which is dangerous. They can't do that in a car seat when the 5-point harness is properly adjusted. The seatbelt cannot protect a child who is not in the proper position. Most children cannot be trusted to sit properly until at least five years old. Many parents find that their child is actually much older than four before they can be expected to sit still in a booster. If your vehicle has lap-only seatbelts in the rear seats, keep your child in a harnessed car seat as long as possible. Harnessed seats can be installed with a lap-only belt. Booster seats absolutely must be used with a lap/shoulder belt. Extended harnessing, or using a harnessed car seat with a higher weight limit, is vastly preferable to moving a child into a lap-only seatbelt. If you have a pre-2008 vehicle with a lap-only belt in the center, it is important to know that car seats can safely go there but boosters and big kids should not. Boosters and big kids need the protection of a shoulder belt. Therefore, if you need to have a kid ride in the center, make sure to use a car seat with a 5-point harness there. If you think your child is outgrowing their harnessed car seat, first be sure that you're checking the right signs to judge the fit. Most children outgrow harnessed car seats by height long before they outgrow by weight, particularly with the 65-pound seats. When your child is forward-facing, the harness slots should be at or above the child's shoulders. When the shoulders are above the top slots, it's time to change seats. A forward-facing car seat is also outgrown by height when the tops of the child's ears reach the top of the car seat shell, unless the manufacturer states otherwise in the instructions. When checking the weight limits of the car seat, and be sure you're looking at the forward-facing harness weight limit, not the booster weight limit (if it is a harness-to-booster seat). There are many harness-to-booster car seats available today with a higher harness limit that later become booster seats if you're concerned about buying another car seat and then a booster. Look for a car seat with a higher harnessed weight limit and a higher top shoulder strap height. This will allow the seat to be used longer in car seat mode (and likely, but not always, in booster mode too). The range of car seats available today means no family should struggle to find even a budget model that allows their child to remain safely harnessed to a minimum of age five, and most likely far beyond that. Thanks for your feedback! What are your concerns?

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