Headline: AAA analysis underscores car seat safety

Deckhead: Data reveal nearly half of children injured not in car seat

New analysis from AAA examined five years of crash data from the U.S. Department of Transportation and points to a lack of proper child-restraint use among children injured or killed in car crashes.

The results of this analysis, released by AAA and car seat leader Chicco USA, uncovered that nearly half (48%) of children ages 10 and younger who were injured and half (51%) who were killed in car crashes were using a vehicle seatbelt prematurely or no restraint instead of a car seat.

Families spend a significant amount of time on the road and, from 2017-21, more than 3.9 million children ages 10 and younger were involved in crashes while riding in a vehicle, 527,000 were injured and 2,789 were killed.

“AAA’s in-depth analysis of crash data has brought to light safety issues that concern us, and we’re in a position to help by sharing our expert resources about car seat safety use factors such as proper seat installation, type of seat and mode of use at each stage of child growth,” said William Hasse, vice president of marketing, Chicco USA.

Infant seats, boosters and seatbelts will effectively protect young passengers when used properly. The U.S. Department of Transportation found that child restraints reduce fatalities by 71% for infants younger than 1 and by 54% of children 1 to 4 years old in passenger cars.

According to AAA’s analysis, the most recent data from the DoT reflects a need for parents to ensure they are using the correct child-restraint system for each phase of growth. Chicco Child Passenger Safety Technician Josh Dilts offers the following advice for families:

***Don’t skip the booster phase –*** The data decreased by more than half in car seat use from age 7 to age 8, an age that saw significant injuries reported. Many parents must not know that seat belt fit is more about the child’s height than age (many state laws focus on age only). Based on their size, children upwards of 10 years old may benefit from using a booster seat. Most booster seats accommodate children as tall as 57 inches.

***Children should always use a restraint when riding in vehicles –*** Shifting from a car seat to a vehicle seatbelt too early isn’t the only issue. Nearly four in 10 children, ages 7-10, killed in a car crash, were completely unrestrained and, of the youngest children (ages 0-3), nearly one in four who were killed were unrestrained. Chicco’s Dilts notes that the use of restraints, which is defined by this dataset as not using a car seat, booster seat, seatbelt or strapped into the vehicle in any manner, is alarming.

“Parents should be diligent in ensuring their child is properly restrained in the car before it is in motion, especially if the child is not old enough to secure themselves,” said Dilts.

***Use available resources –*** Chicco offers the most recent car seat guidelines, installation tutorials and caregiver FAQs on ChiccoUSA.com. Local fire departments often have a child passenger safety technician on hand who can check if your car seat is correctly installed. For more resources, visit AAA.com.

Cutline: STRAP IN – Children dying or injured during car crashes often were not properly secured in the vehicle. Sergey. Adobe Stock.