

Puffy coats and car seats

Puffy winter coats affect how the harness in a car seat fits your child. The extra coat padding makes it hard to get the harness to fit correctly. The harness might feel snug, but the extra material will compress in a crash, making the harness too loose. Loose harness straps means your child will not be safe in a crash.

How to know if a coat is safe

Here's a simple way to check whether your child's coat is safe to wear underneath a harness:

Step 1: Put the coat on your child.

Step 2: Sit them in the car seat. Buckle and tighten the harness.

Step 3: Without loosening the harness, unbuckle it, and remove your child from the car seat.

Step 4: Take the coat off.

Step 5: Strap your child back into the car seat without adjusting the straps. If the harness is too loose, the coat is too thick to wear under the harness.

Tips for bundling up

- Put your child in thin, warm layers like fleece.
- After the child is snug in the car seat harness, layer blankets over the top of the harness, or put the coat on backward over the arms and shoulders.
- For older children in booster seats, buckle the seatbelt, then put the coat on backward over the arms and shoulders.



Four inches matter

A puffy coat adds four inches of slack to car seat harness straps. Imagine how loose your pants would be if you added four inches to the waist. A loose car-seat harness greatly increases the risk of injury to your child.

Resources

childrenswi.org/carseats
safetycenter@childrenswi.org

