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“Ask the Chiropractor”

Booster seats prevent injuries in accidents

Question: What type of safety belt will protect my 6-year-old’s spine if we were to get into an auto accident?

Answer: Unfortunately there is no seat belt that prevents or gives total protection from auto accidents. Even the slightest fender bender transfers unnatural forces to the spine. A study published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* researched 3,616 accidents involving 4,243 children in 15 states and found that children in booster seats suffered injuries in 0.77 percent of crashes, compared to 1.95 percent of children who were using seat belts only. None of the children in booster seats suffered from spinal cord or abdominal injuries, whereas injuries in children using seat belts included all parts of their body.

Booster seats that correctly position seat belts should be required for all children up to the age of 7 based on research from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. Maine is the only state that requires booster seats up to the age of 8.

The parent or guardian of a child under 8 can maintain additional protection and prevention by checking strap positions for snugness and proper placement prior to driving. Utilization of a soft material over the seat belt can supply comfort to your child also.

Should you have the misfortune of being in a motor vehicle accident you should have your spine checked first by a chiropractor, no matter how light you may feel the impact or the damage may have been. The physics of impact between two 2-ton objects colliding at any speed transfers enormous forces to a 50 to 200 pound object, meaning you. The body, especially the spine, does not always exhibit symptoms from these impacts immediately. In fact, many patients do not exhibit symptoms until weeks or even months after the initial accident. The earlier appropriate treatment is administered the less likely your injuries will be symptomatic as well as severe. Many times parents do not consider their children in an accident because they don't complain. Young children do not have the ability to decipher severity of injury nor can they communicate specifically the location of their symptoms. Any spinal injury is a deep concern because with or without symptoms it can affect spinal growth and development.

If you or someone you know is in an automobile accident with their children make sure they all get checked by a chiropractor as soon as possible.

Quote of the week: "Success means we go to sleep at night knowing that our talents and abilities were used in a way that served others." – Marianne Williamson