

Tips to Keep Tweens Safe in Vehicles

How big is the problem?

- Traffic crashes are a leading cause of injury and death in tweens (8-12 year olds).
- More than 35% of New York State tweens who were hospitalized due to motor vehicle crashes were diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury (TBI), an injury to the brain caused by an external force such as a strike or impact.
- The risk of being hospitalized due to a motor vehicle crash increases as the child’s age increases. This is because older tweens are more likely to ride in the front seat and less likely to buckle up when compared to younger children.



Tween Passenger Injury Statistics

\$6,000,000 annually in hospital charges

~ 3,000 treated at hospitals annually

What does the law say about tween passenger safety?

- Children under age 16 must be restrained when riding in motor vehicles.
- All children under eight years old must be restrained in an appropriate child restraint system (child safety seat or booster seat).
- An appropriate child restraint system is one that meets the child’s size and weight specified by the manufacturer (see New York’s Occupant Restraint Law: www.safenyny.gov)

What are the key safety issues and prevention strategies?

In addition to passenger safety law, below are recommendations to keep tween passengers safe.

Safety Issue*	Prevention Strategy
Riding in the front seat too soon. 43% of tweens report sitting in the front seat when riding in the car. Tweens are more likely to be injured in the front seat if in a car crash.	Seat children under age 13 in the backseat. Children riding in the backseat are almost 20% less likely to be injured in a crash.
Not big enough for just a seat belt. Smaller tweens are more likely to be injured in a car crash when not riding in a booster seat due to improper placement of the seat belt.	Use the Five Step Test to determine if a tween is big enough to use a seat belt (www.safenyny.gov/CPS/toolkit-info/NYS-5steptest.pdf). A child under four feet nine inches tall is less likely to be injured in a crash when using a belt positioning booster seat compared to a child using the seat belt alone.
Inconsistently buckled up. 13% of tweens report inconsistent seat belt use. Tweens are more likely to be injured in a car crash when not wearing a seat belt or riding in a belt positioning booster seat.	Make sure everyone buckles up. Encourage seat belt use in all seating positions. It’s the law.

* Statistics cited from the New York State Association of Traffic Safety Boards sample of 8-12 year-olds.

