

# Hold On to Dear Life

October 2018



What's not to love about October? The leaves are glorious, the days are cooler, and Halloween is just waiting for kids at the end of the month. But according to the National Safety Council, children are [more than twice as likely](#) to be hit by a car on Halloween than on any other day of the year. By month, in 2017, October ranked No. 2 nationally in motor vehicle deaths with 3,550. August was first with 3,642 deaths.

You can find [Halloween safety tips](#) about costumes and treats for children in a lot of places, but what about tips for teens and adults? How can drivers help insure a safer Halloween and October for children?



Halloween can be difficult for drivers because there are so many more kids out on the streets. Children can behave unpredictably, especially when excited and rushing to get the next treat. Their costumes can make them difficult to see after dark.

The following tips for drivers are from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

## Tips for Drivers

- **Drive slowly** in and around neighborhoods and on residential streets. Expect that there will be children. Keep your windshield clean.
- **Don't drink and drive.** Drunken-driving incidents increase on Halloween. If you see a drunk driver or an impaired pedestrian, call your local police department to report them.
- Drivers should **be responsible** and understand that Halloween is especially dangerous.
- **Watch for children** who may dart out into the street. When drivers see one child, more are likely to be close by.
- If you're driving children around for trick-or-treating, **make sure everyone is buckled up** appropriately in a car seat, booster or seat belt. Do this every time they enter the car, and check to make sure they're secure before driving to the next stop.
- **Pull over at safe locations** to let children exit on the curb, away from traffic. Use your hazard lights to alert other drivers of your car.
- **Spot the Tot.** Try to park in a spot where you won't need to back up. But if you must, have an adult outside or walk completely around your vehicle to make sure no children are in the way.
- **Put your cell phone down** and don't use any other mobile device while driving. Pull over to safely check voice messages or texts if necessary.



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## What? My Car Seat Expires?

Speaking of Halloween safety, another scary thought is the number of kids riding in expired car seats. Many parents are not aware that car seats have a "Do Not Use After" date. So why do they expire? Here are some reasons why:

**#1: Materials break down over time.** Most car seats are made of a hard, durable plastic, which is designed to withstand strong crash forces and protect your child. When you consider the extreme temperature changes from blistering hot in the summer - to the deep freeze of winter, you can understand that plastics may degrade over the years.

In addition, if you consider the multiple times you install, remove, loosen, tighten, take apart, wash, and reassemble a seat, it makes sense that materials will experience a lot of wear and tear. Then there are the many kinds of fluids that can seep down to the metal parts of the seat and cause rust.

**#2: Safety standards and technologies are changing.** You might think you have a perfectly good car seat sitting in your garage, but it may not meet current safety standards. Just in the last few years, NHTSA has changed the rules regarding the LATCH system and has proposed new guidelines for side-impact crash tests.

T-Bone crashes happen much less often than frontal ones but can be much deadlier. Early tests showed many infant seats flew off their base in a side crash.

Thankfully, most car seat manufacturers have added side-impact safety features to their seats.

**#3: Parts get lost or broken.** After the seat has expired, it may be difficult to find parts. Pieces crack, break or get lost and padding wears out. We see a lot of kids riding on just the hard-plastic shell of a seat because the cover and padding are gone.

## How can I tell if my car seat is expired?

Almost all car seats expire, but their lifespan varies from seat to seat. There are a couple of ways to find out when your car seat expires.

First, look for the manufacturer's label which is usually found on the bottom or side of the seat. If the date is not printed on this label, you may find it stamped in the plastic in the back of the seat. Just remember that for infant seats with a removable base you will need to check both labels.

Your owner's manual may say, "do not use after six years," so you can do the math. If you are still having trouble, call the manufacturer. They will ask for the model number and manufacture date of your seat, (which you find on the label.) If your labels are missing, assume the seat has expired.

Your expired seat is not going to disintegrate overnight and is safer than not using a car seat at all, but you should replace it as soon as you can. Do not sell or give the old seat away. Cut out the harness, write "Expired, Do Not Use" on the seat and throw it in the trash. As of now, there is not a way to recycle the plastic parts of car seats.

For help with all your safety concerns call us at 801-662-6580 or visit us at [primarychildrens.org/safety](http://primarychildrens.org/safety).

