

CHOP Child Passenger Safety Experts Respond to Concerns over Government Crash Tests of Infant Seats

March 2, 2009 – Following recent news stories reporting on the poor performance of infant seats in government crash tests, child passenger safety researchers at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention want to offer reassurance to parents concerned about their children's safety.

Since 1999, CHOP has conducted in-depth examinations of thousands of crashes involving children as part of the world's largest study of child crash injury.

“Our investigations of real-world crashes over the past ten years found infants in rear-facing car seats had an extremely low risk of injury in a crash. Of the crashes studied, very few infants in rear-facing seats were injured,” says Kristy Arbogast, PhD, director of engineering at the Center for Injury Research and Prevention. “Of the few injuries we did see, most were minor and without long term consequences.”

Arbogast and her colleagues say the recent news reinforces the call for renewed attention to the unique needs of children in motor vehicle safety. “As vehicle and restraint designs change, we need to continue to monitor the safety of children in motor vehicle crashes, or we risk jeopardizing the incredible progress that's been made to date. We should not assume that the safety solutions of yesterday remain the optimal solutions for the future. Children are not small adults and have unique safety needs.”

In the meantime Arbogast says, “Parents can feel reassured that a rear-facing infant seat that properly fits the vehicle, and is installed securely provides children with *the best* protection possible while riding in a car. The risk of injury for an infant properly secured in a rear-facing infant seat is less than one percent.”

The Center also offers additional help for concerned parents:

- Parents should make sure the seat they choose is one that fits snugly in their vehicle(s), and that the harnesses fit their child properly and securely.
- When installing the rear-facing seat into the carseat base, always confirm that both sides are securely clicked in by giving a quick tug on both sides of the car seat where it clicks into the base.
- The Center for Injury Research and Prevention offers extensive, research-driven advice for parents, including brief web videos on how to choose and install the right car seat for your vehicle and child, at www.chop.edu/carseat
- Concerned parents can also use the web site to find a certified child passenger safety (CPS) technician in their community to teach them how to ensure that their car seat is safe and that their child is well-protected in the car.