



## MORROW COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

"Your Partner in Prevention and Preparedness."

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For Immediate Release

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# Winter Coats and Car Seats Don't Mix

Winter is in full swing and the temperature has been bitter cold. This is the time of year you see kids and babies in their car seats with their winter coats and snow suits on to keep them warm. Using bulky winter clothes is just not safe to use with car seats.

One of the basics of correct car seat installation, in addition to buckling the car seat tightly into your vehicle, is that your child is 'buckled snugly' into the car seat itself. If the harness straps are loose, then your child can be injured or could even fly out of the car seat if you are in a crash.

Instead of putting your child in a car seat with a heavy winter coat, the Ohio Department of Public Safety recommends that you 'keep your child in the clothes they will be wearing when they are indoors. Place the child in the infant seat or car seat, making sure the harness straps are snug over the shoulders and that they lie straight and flat down to the buckle. Buckle the child in and THEN put the coat or blanket OVER them -- on TOP of the harness system. You can even turn the coat around and put his arms through the sleeves after he is buckled into his car seat. This will ensure your kids are kept snug in their seat, the harness system is able to do its job in the event of a crash, and that the kids stay warm.'

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration also recommends that 'to keep your baby the safest, always remove bulky clothing or blankets before you place the child in the seat. Then, put the blanket or coat over the baby. You should never place anything thick underneath the baby, unless that item came with the car seat originally — which tells you it's been tested by the

### Check All Winter Coats for Car Seat Safety

It's easy to check and see whether a baby's winter coat or infant snowsuit is too thick to be safe in a car seat. This test will show you how thick the coat is and how much the coat will compress during a crash.

1. Take the car seat into the house.
2. Put the winter coat or snowsuit on the child.
3. Put the child in the car seat and buckle the harnesses as you normally would before car travel. Adjust the straps to the appropriate fit for your child.
4. Take the child out of the car seat without loosening the straps at all.
5. Take the coat off your child.
6. Put the child back in the car seat and buckle the harnesses again, but do not tighten the straps.
7. If you can fit more than two fingers under the harness at the child's shoulder bone, the coat is too thick and is not safe for use with the car seat.

manufacturer. When a child is wearing a thick coat, it's hard to tell if you have a good harness fit, which is crucial. A coat can add a lot of slack, reducing the level of protection for your child in a crash.'

Still not sure what to do? The Morrow County Health Department has two certified Car Seat Technicians available to answer your questions and inspect your car seat installation. Call them today at (419)947-1545 or online at [www.MorrowCountyHealth.org](http://www.MorrowCountyHealth.org). We are "Your Partner in Prevention and Preparedness."

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