

Car seat challenge

This leaflet gives more information about the car seat challenge. If you have any questions, please contact the cardiology ward staff or the cardiology clinical nurse specialists (CNS).

What is a car seat challenge?

Babies who go home as part of the home monitoring programme need to be assessed to make sure they can maintain their oxygen saturation levels while travelling in a car seat.

Some young babies have breathing problems when placed in a sitting position or car seat, including babies with complex heart conditions. Their head might flop down and restrict the airway, because a newborn's reflex to keep their head held up is not yet fully developed.

So, it is important to assess how your baby will cope when being transported in their car seat.

When and how the car seat challenge is done

As part of planning to take your baby home, we will ask you to bring in the car seat that they will travel in. If this is a new purchase, please keep the receipt, as you might need to change the seat for a more suitable model.

At least 4 days before you expect to take your baby home, and once the nasogastric (NG) tube is out, the nurses on the ward will do the assessment. This involves monitoring your baby's breathing, heart rate and oxygen saturation levels when they are in the seat, over a set time (a minimum of 1.5 times the travel distance home). If all these observations remain within your baby's target limits, it means that your baby has passed the challenge and can go home in this car seat.

If your baby does not pass the challenge

If your baby's observations fall below the target range for them, it means that they have not passed the challenge. It might be that your baby is too small or vulnerable at this time to sit in this position. We will then check with other health professionals if the car seat can be adapted to allow your baby to be in a better position, and therefore tolerate the car seat.

The car seat challenge can only be done up to 3 times. After this time it might be necessary for you to buy a car seat that allows your baby to lie flat. The nurse looking after your baby will give you information about car seats. The assessment would need to be done again in the new or adapted car seat before you can go home with your baby.

Other information about car seats that you should know

- Car seats should only be used to transport babies in cars, and not as a main sleeping place.
- Try to support your baby's head to prevent it from 'scrunching up and over', and keep an eye on their neckline.
- Where possible, 2 adults should accompany your baby when travelling in the car, especially on long journeys.
- You should not travel with your baby in a car seat for longer than 2 hours at a time. After this time you should take a break and remove your baby from the car seat for at least 30 minutes before resuming your journey.
- Babies find it difficult to regulate their temperature, and quickly overheat. When in the car, remove any headwear your baby is wearing as they lose excess heat through their head.
- Be wary of thick snowsuits. It may be cold outside, but cars can heat up quickly. Natural materials will help the baby's body regulate heat rather than nylon, polyester or other man-made materials.

Useful sources of information

Child Car Seats offers independent car seat advice and is supported by the Department of Transport, [web](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk) www.childcarseats.org.uk

Evelina Children's Heart Organisation (ECHO) is a charity that supports the families of children with congenital heart disease who receive treatment at the Evelina London Children's Hospital, [phone](tel:02079984710) 020 7998 4710, [email](mailto:hello@echo-uk.org) hello@echo-uk.org [web](http://www.echo-uk.org) www.echo-uk.org

Little Hearts Matter (LHM) is a national charity that offers support and information to families when a single-ventricle heart condition has been diagnosed, [phone](tel:01214558982) 0121 455 8982, [email](mailto:info@lhm.org.uk) info@lhm.org.uk [web](http://www.lhm.org.uk) www.lhm.org.uk

Children's Heart Federation (CHF) is a national charity working to meet the needs of children with congenital and acquired heart conditions and their families, [Infoline:](tel:03005610065) 0300 561 0065, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, [email](mailto:info@chfed.org.uk) info@chfed.org.uk [web](http://www.chfed.org.uk) www.chfed.org.uk

British Heart Foundation (BHF) is a national charity providing information and support on anything heart-related, [Helpline:](tel:03003303311) (local rate) 0300 330 3311, [web:](http://www.bhf.org.uk) www.bhf.org.uk

Contact us

If you have any questions about the car seat challenge, please contact the cardiology outreach team, [phone](tel:02071884546) 020 7188 4546, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, [email](mailto:PaediatricCardiologyCNS@gstt.nhs.uk) PaediatricCardiologyCNS@gstt.nhs.uk

Out of hours, please contact the paediatric cardiology ward, [phone](tel:02071888849) 020 7188 8849.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets) www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets



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