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## The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Response to the IIHS Booster Seat/ Belt Fit Report

On Wednesday October 1, 2008, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) released results of its study that examined the ability of booster seats to position seat belts appropriately on child occupants. The research suggests that booster seats vary in positioning seat belts; some are more likely to provide good fit, while others are less likely to do so.

**Parents should not interpret these findings to mean that booster seats are ineffective.** In real world crashes, booster seats are extremely effective in reducing injuries, especially injuries to the abdomen, spine and neck. According to research conducted by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) involving children in real-world crashes from 1999 through 2002, using a booster seat in the rear seat reduces a child's risk of injury by almost 60 percent, compared with using a seat belt alone (Durbin et al, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2003). A recent update of this analysis with data through 2007 confirmed this finding.

What should parents do in response to this study? Before purchasing a booster seat, parents should check to see if it appropriately fits their child and vehicle. Children and vehicles come in all shapes and sizes. Parents should refer to the latest booster fit guidelines at [www.chop.edu/carseat](http://www.chop.edu/carseat) before deciding on a purchase.

In summary, this study raises awareness of a booster seat's primary job – to position the seat belt appropriately on the child using it. By drawing attention to this issue, more parents will be armed with the correct information to make the best child vehicle restraint choice and booster seat manufacturers will be encouraged to further optimize an already proven effective restraint.