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RENTS ■ JUNE 2006

# Too Big For Boosters?

## Think Again!

By LIBBY CARTY McNAMEE

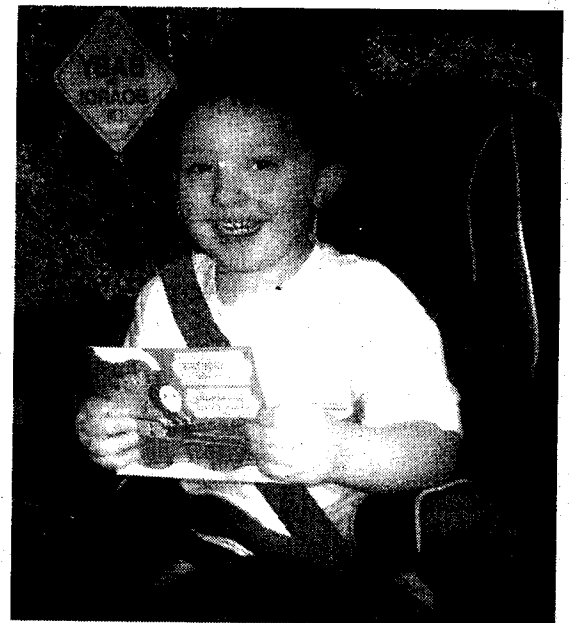
**H**as your child grown too big for the convertible car seat, yet is not big enough to properly wear the adult seat belt? Sounds like a belt-positioning booster seat would be ju-u-u-ust right!

Once children are over 40 pounds and/or reach age four, they are generally still too small for vehicle safety belts, which lay incorrectly across their neck and along their stomach. Such kids need a boost to ensure the shoulder belt rests over their shoulder and across their chests. In addition, the lap belt should fit low and tight over their upper thighs.

Belt-positioning booster seats utilize the vehicle's built-in lap and shoulder belts to restrain the child. If your car does not have shoulder belts in the back seats where booster always belong, contact your car dealer to order a retrofit kit designed specifically for your vehicle by the manufacturer.

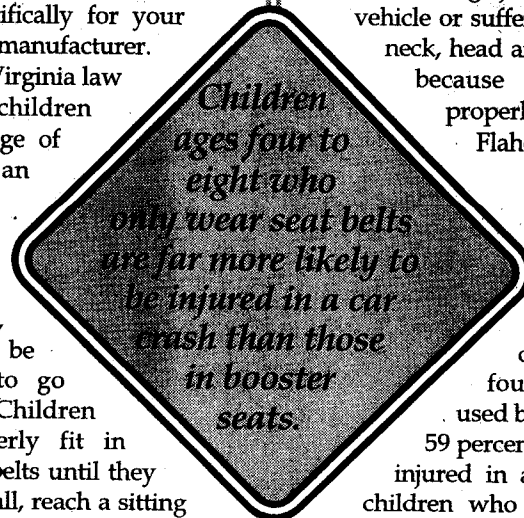
Although Virginia law requires children through the age of five to use an appropriate child safety seat, which includes booster seats, this may not be old enough to go booster-free. Children do not properly fit in shoulder/lap belts until they are 58 inches tall, reach a sitting height of 29 inches, and weigh 80 pounds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In Virginia, children ages six and up are only required to use safety belts, but booster seats are recommended. "From the infant car seat to the belt-positioning booster seat, these child safety restraint systems are specifically designed to grow with



and best safeguard the child," cautions Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, superintendent of the Virginia State Police.

"Even with the most basic traffic crashes, our troopers see too many children being ejected from inside a vehicle or suffering from serious neck, head and spinal injuries because they were not properly secured," says Flaherty.



A study conducted by Children's Hospital of Philadelphia found that children ages four to eight who used booster seats were 59 percent less likely to be injured in a car crash than children who were restrained only by seat belts.

The study also found that in Virginia only four percent of children in that age group were appropriately restrained in a belt-positioning booster seat. Instead, a whopping 86 percent used adult seat belts.

So give your child a boost—and give a big boost to safety at the same time! **RPM**