

If a baby fails the Car Seat Tolerance Screen (CSTS)

Check these things before re-starting the CSTS, or before starting the repeat test 12-24 hours after the failed test

Check:	To Do:
Is the baby sitting in the car seat properly—her bottom at the lowest point, and her back flat against the seat back? (i.e., NOT slouched)	Re-position baby in the car seat, keeping her back flat, spine straight, and harness straps holding baby snugly. Check the car seat’s manual to see if the seat is adjusted to fit a premature or newborn baby; a body insert may be required (and then is sold with seat). Adjustments may be at shoulder height, hip width, harness length, and buckle strap location & length.
Is the car seat reclined properly so that baby’s head is tilted back with no “chin-to-chest”?	Look on side of car seat (not the base) for a recline indicator or label to show the “recline line” for rear-facing car seat use. There may be a “newborn” setting. Prop the seat to maintain the proper recline for the CSTS.
Is the baby’s chin still touching his chest, or near it?	Check if there is a head pillow/insert that came with the seat, then check the car seat manual to see if you can remove it to tilt baby’s head back more.
Are the shoulder pads on the car seat’s harnesses bunching up or pushing the chest strap too low? Is the baby’s clothing bulky in the neck area?	Check the car seat manual to see if the shoulder pads can be removed. Smooth out baby’s clothing so there is nothing bulky near the neck or over the chest.
Are the harness straps too tight or too loose on the baby?	Pull harness straps snug over hips, and up toward shoulders. Tighten straps just until you can no longer pinch any webbing along the straps near the shoulders.

Specific concerns about a baby’s fit in their car seat? In-person and virtual help is available. Contact MD Kids in Safety Seats at 410-767-6016, email: MDH.Kiss@maryland.org or MIEMSS’ CPS Healthcare Project at cps@miemss.org. If a clinician has checked/adjusted all these things and a baby fails a 2nd or 3rd time, consider NICU admission or medical workup.