



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT:**

Jessica Wheeler  
(602) 546-0824  
(602) 202-2229 (pager)  
jwheeler1@phoenixchildrens.com

## **AAA Expects More Americans to Travel by Motor Vehicle Memorial Day Weekend, Phoenix Children's Provides Tips to Keep Child Passengers Riding Safe**

PHOENIX, Ariz. (May 23, 2007) – AAA estimates 38.3 million Americans will travel 50 miles or more from home this Memorial Day. According to the auto club, 84 percent, or approximately 32.1 million of these vacationers, will travel by motor vehicle – up 1.8 percent from last year. Phoenix Children's Hospital provides families with helpful tips to keep child passengers riding safe this holiday weekend.

Phoenix Children's supports the national "Click It or Ticket" campaign, launched Monday to encourage seat belt use. According to the National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration, Arizonans lessened their habit to strap on their seat belts last year – dropping from more than 94 percent buckling up to almost 79 percent. Erin Rodda Kuroiwa, Child Passenger Safety Program Coordinator at Phoenix Children's, reminds travelers that wearing a seat belt is a fundamental step in the safety equation.

"Make it a habit to have all passengers buckle up before starting your automobile," said Rodda Kuroiwa. "It's the law – all front seat passengers must wear a seat belt. Avoid the fine and keep your passengers safe by strapping on your seat belts."

Arizona law also requires passengers younger than five years-old ride in a child safety seat. Rodda Kuroiwa says infant and car seats are commonly used for tiny travelers. The booster seat is an effective, but often forgotten, safety device for kids between 40 and 100 pounds and less than 4 feet 9 inches tall.

"Using a booster seat, compared to a seat belt alone, can lower the risk of injury by 59%," said Rodda Kuroiwa.

To determine if your child needs a booster seat, Rodda Kuroiwa recommends using a test developed by *SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.* Start by having your child sit in the car without a booster seat.

- Does your child sit all the way back against the seat?
- Do your child's knees bend comfortably at the edge of seat?
- Does the belt go across the shoulder between the neck and arm?
- Is the lap belt as low as possible, touching the thighs?
- Can your child stay seated comfortably like this for the whole trip?

If you answered "no" to any of the five questions, Rodda Kuroiwa says you need to buy a booster seat for your child. Booster seats cost \$15 and up, and are available at numerous retailers statewide.

For additional information on child passenger safety and other pediatric health topics, contact The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital at (602) 546-1400.

Phoenix Children's Hospital is Arizona's leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children's hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Phoenix Children's leadership position. For information about Phoenix Children's, visit the Hospital's website at [www.phoenixchildrens.com](http://www.phoenixchildrens.com).