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For Immediate Release: January 5, 2007

AAP STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF CAR SAFETY SEATS

CHICAGO -- The nation's pediatricians want to reassure parents that car safety seats are effective in protecting children. The reassurance is in response to today's media coverage of Consumer Reports magazines report on infant car safety seats. With motor vehicle crashes the number 1 cause of death in children, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) reiterates the critical importance of all children riding properly restrained on every car trip.

Statistics from the National Highway Transportation Administration (NHTSA) show car safety seats save lives:

- The rate of motor vehicle crash deaths in children ages birth to 4 has been cut nearly in half since 1975, largely because of the use of car safety seats.
- The lives of almost 8,000 children under age 5 were saved by the use of restraints since 1975.
- In 2005, the lives of an estimated 420 children under age 5 were saved by restraint use. If 100% of the children in this age group had been properly restrained, almost 100 more lives could have been saved.
- Car safety seats reduce the risk of death by 71% for infants and by 54% for children ages 1 to 4 years. Belt-positioning booster seats reduce the risk of injury by 59% for children ages 4 through 7 years.

"The bottom line is car seats are the most effective way to protect children in motor vehicle crashes," said AAP President Jay E. Berkelhamer, MD, FAAP. "Parents should continue to use the proper car safety seat for every child for every single trip."

The AAP provides the following guidance to parents about protecting their children in crashes:

- All infants should ride rear-facing until they are at least 1 year old and weigh at least 20 pounds. It is best to ride rear-facing as long as possible.
- Toddlers should ride in a forward-facing car safety seat with a harness until they reach the seats weight or height limit.
- After outgrowing a seat with a harness, children should ride in belt-positioning booster seats until the seat belts fit properly-the lap belt fits across the upper thighs, the shoulder belt lies across the chest and shoulder, and the child can sit against the vehicle seat back with legs bent.
- Children should ride in the rear seat until age 13.
- All passengers should be properly restrained in a car safety seat or seat belt.

Parents can get help making sure their children are as safe as possible on the road by consulting a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician. To find an inspection station, visit <http://www.seatcheck.org> or call toll-free at 866/SEATCHECK (866/732-8243). For more information about child passenger safety, visit <http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/carseatsafety.cfm>

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.

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