Parents go to great lengths to keep children safe at home and on the road. But what about in the air? When you’re traveling by airplane, an approved child restraint system (CRS) is the only way to make sure your little one will be safe in the event of turbulence or an emergency.

Turbulence is air movement that normally cannot be seen and often occurs unexpectedly. It can be created by many different conditions, including atmospheric pressure, jet streams, air around mountains, cold or warm weather fronts or thunderstorms. Turbulence can even occur when the sky appears to be clear.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) strongly urges you to secure your child in an appropriate restraint based on weight and size. Turbulence can happen with little or no warning. And when it does, the safest place for your child is in a CRS, not in an adult’s lap. Your arms just aren’t capable of holding your child securely, especially when turbulence is unexpected. Keeping your child in a CRS for the duration of the flight is the smart and right thing to do so that everyone in your family arrives safely at your destination.
Always follow the manufacturer’s instructions for using a CRS. Be sure that the shoulder straps are properly adjusted and fasten the airplane seat belt around the CRS as tightly as possible.

Do not place a child in a CRS designed for a smaller or larger child than indicated in the manufacturer’s instructions. The FAA recommends that a child weighing:

- Less than 20 pounds use a rear-facing CRS.
- From 20 to 40 pounds use a forward-facing CRS.
- More than 40 pounds use an airplane seat belt.

While booster seats and harness vests enhance safety in vehicles, the FAA prohibits passengers from bringing these types of devices on airplanes for use during taxi, take-off and landing. They should be checked as baggage. Also, supplemental lap restraints or “belly belts” are banned for use in both airplanes and vehicles in the United States.

It’s a good idea to bring this brochure with you when you travel. For more information, visit www.faa.gov. And remember that adults should wear their seat belts at all times while on board, too, because turbulence happens!