

A Simple Guide to Child Restraints

You never know when a crash will happen. Each year thousands of children are killed or injured in road crashes. Most of these injuries could have been avoided by using a correctly fitted and approved baby restraint, child restraint or seat belt.

Your children must use restraints to be safe in a crash. Restraints are necessary even when driving at low speeds or on short trips. Your children are not safe simply because they are in the back seat.

No matter how carefully you drive, an unexpected crash can still happen. By using restraints you and your children have the best possible protection when travelling in a car. Remember to use them always.



Pregnancy

It is very important that you wear a seat belt if you are pregnant. A seat belt that is worn properly puts little pressure on your stomach and therefore on your unborn child. Research has shown that wearing a seat belt is the best way to protect yourself and your child.

Make sure you wear the seat belt properly as shown in the photograph.

CORRECT USE:

- Lap part sitting over the thighs, across the pelvis, below your unborn child.
- Sash part above the stomach and between the breasts.

Babies

Up to 9kg: birth to approximately 6 months old

Get a baby restraint before your baby is born so that baby's first trip in the car (probably home from the hospital) is safe. Baby restraints fit into one of the rear seat positions of the car and attach to a specially designed anchorage fitting.



Warning: Do not use a rear facing child restraint in the front seat of cars fitted with a passenger airbag. An inflating airbag can cause serious injury or death to the baby.

Choosing a Baby Restraint

You'll find a wide choice of brands and styles available. Think about these questions when buying a baby restraint:

- Does it fit in the car?
- Is the seat belt long enough to go around the restraint?
- Is it easy for you to use?

Hiring a Baby Restraint

Baby restraints can be hired in most countries through some hospitals, local councils, community groups or private companies.

CORRECT USE:

- Anchor the baby restraint correctly and firmly to the car using the top tether strap.
- Attach the seat belt exactly as shown in the instructions.
- Check that the securing straps are not slack every time you use the restraint.
- The shoulder straps should be located just above your baby's shoulders or at shoulder height.
- Make sure that the harness or body band is adjusted to fit firmly around your baby.

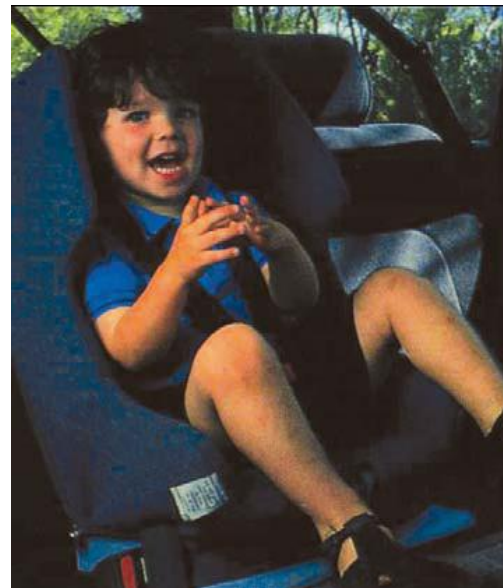
Crawlers and Toddlers

8 - 18kg: approximately 6 months old to 4 years

For maximum safety, keep using the baby restraint until your child outgrows it, or is at least 8kg or 70cm in length. Your child should then change to using a child seat.

The time to reverse a convertible restraint to an upright position is also when your child reaches 8kg or 70cm in length. Convertibles can be difficult to change to the upright position. Make sure you follow the instructions exactly.

A child seat should be used until the child no longer fits; when the child's shoulders are too broad to fit in the seat; or the child's head is above the back of the child seat.



Specially designed seats for children with disabilities are also available.

CORRECT USE:

- Anchor the child seat firmly to the car using the top tether strap.
- Attach the seat belt exactly as shown in the instructions.
- All securing straps need to be as tight as possible. Press the child restraint into the car seat cushion with your body weight to get a really tight fit.

- Check by tugging on the child seat. It should stay firmly in place.
- Make sure the harness holding your child is buckled, and the straps fit firmly.

Young Children / Older Children

14 - 32kg: approximately 4 years to 8 years

Once your child has outgrown the child seat, your child should use a booster. There are a number of different boosters available, designed for various weight ranges. You can check the weight range by looking at the information on the packaging.



Booster and Seat Belt

A booster with a seat belt is for children weighing either 14 to 26kg or 14 to 32kg depending on the model chosen. It is important to make sure the booster chosen is appropriate for your child's weight. A booster cushion/seat will raise your child to window level and help to improve the fit of the seat belt. Boosters with backs and sides will provide support for a sleeping child and also help to hold the sash part of the seat belt in the correct place.

Boosters are best used with an adult lap/sash seat belt, or with a child harness in the rear centre position.

The booster seat is suitable for use until your child's eyes are at the same level as the top of the car seat.

CORRECT USE:

- The booster is not attached to the car, but is held in place by the lap/sash seat belt or child harness and lap belt worn by your child.
- Make sure the seat belt sits over your child's shoulder. Use the sash guide or adjuster to hold the sash part of the seat belt away from the child's neck.
- All the straps should be firm.

NOTE: Never use a booster seat with a lap-only seat belt, as it is dangerous.

Child Harness

Child harnesses are designed to be used with a lap belt in the centre of the rear seat. Child harnesses are restraining straps to hold the child's upper body. Most harnesses can be used by children 14 to 32kg (up to approximately 8 years old). Check before you buy that the harness comes in the weight range you need. There should be a weight chart on the harness packaging.

CORRECT USE:

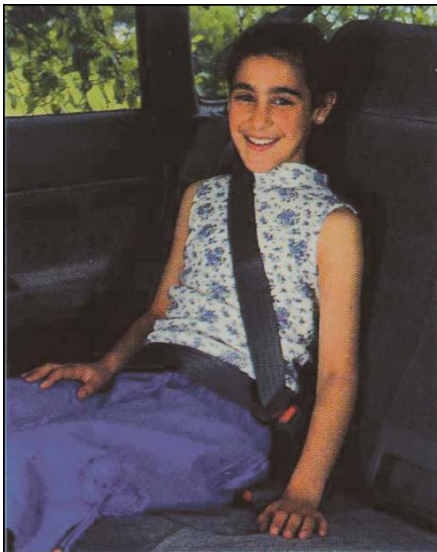
Harnesses can be difficult to use correctly. It is therefore important to:

- Attach the harness to the anchor bolt/fitting.
- Thread the lap belt through the harness.
- First tighten the lap belt with the harness loosened off. The lap belt must be firm and sit across the hips - it must not ride up over the stomach.
- Once the lap belt is adjusted firmly, then gently pull the slack out of the shoulder straps so that they are just firm. The harness must not lift the lap part of the seat belt.

Booster and Child Harness

A booster seat with a harness can be used by children weighing either 14 to 21kg or 14 to 26kg depending on the model chosen. It is important to make sure the weight range is appropriate for your child.

If you use a booster with a harness it is important to make sure the harness is used correctly. The lap belt must be firm and sit across the hips. It must not ride up over the stomach area. Once the lap belt is adjusted firmly, then adjust the shoulder straps so they are firm.



Older Children

Your child is ready to move out of the booster seat when he or she weighs 26 or 32kg depending on the booster, or when your child's eyes are at the same level as the back of the car seat.

A lap/sash belt will provide much better protection than a lap-only belt. Only use a lap-only belt if all lap/sash belts, including those in the front seat are being used.

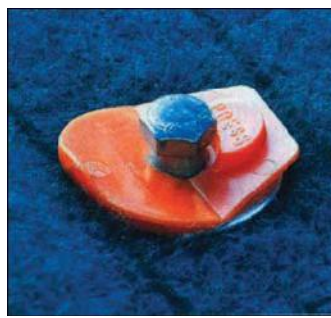
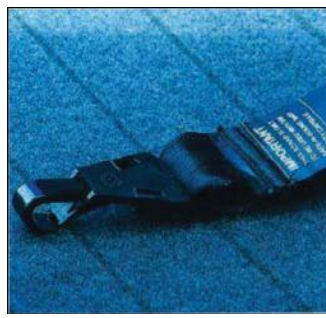
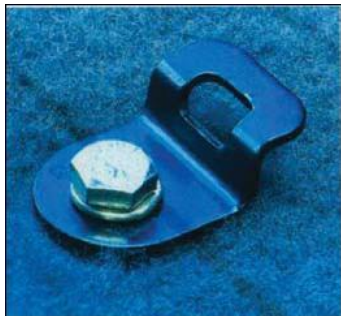
If the seat belt sits against the child's neck, you can buy a sash guide or converter to make it fit better. These are available from some large department stores or baby goods stores.

Warning: Never put two children in a seat belt, or let an adult and a child share a seat belt.

Fitting your Child Restraint

Crash studies show that a restraint may not be safe unless it is properly fitted and adjusted. The best way to be sure that your child restraint is fitted correctly is to go to your local Road Safety Authority for advice.

If you fit the child restraint yourself, follow the manufacturer's instructions exactly. If the instructions are lost, most manufacturers will mail out a copy on request.



Anchor Points

There are two types of anchor points and two types of attachments.

New child restraints and vehicles use the hook style fitting. Older restraints and cars have the bolt and keyhole style. Check your car owner's handbook to see the location and type of anchorage points in your car.

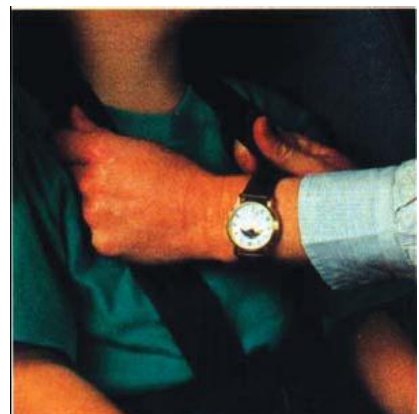
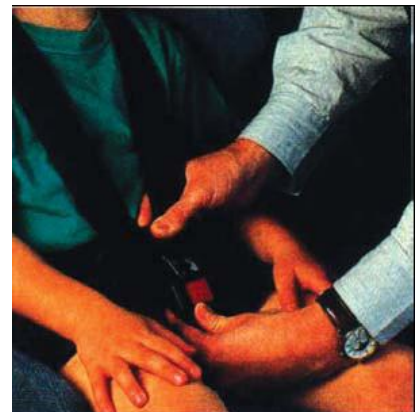
You may need to buy an adaptor for your child seat. The adaptor can convert an attachment so that it suits the anchorage fitting in your car.

Not all cars and vans have anchorage points. Older cars and vans will need to have a bolt fitted, or possibly an anchorage bar, before you can attach a child restraint. Newer cars already have at least one anchorage fitting.

Easy Steps to a Safe Journey

When placing a child in a restraint, remember, snug is safe. Make sure you follow these simple rules for correct use.

- Attach the child restraint exactly as outlined in the manufacturer's instructions using the seat belt and top tether.
- Tighten the straps or body band to fit your child snugly.
- Make sure you hear the buckle 'click' into place. Check that the buckle is done up by tugging on the straps.
- The sash strap of the seat belt should not lie across the child's face or head. It must sit across the shoulder.
- Blankets or rugs should be placed over the top of the harness or body band, not between the body band or harness and the child. Keep the body band free of fluff.
- Even when your child is sleeping it is very important to make certain the restraint is still properly worn and firmly adjusted.



General Information

Second-Hand Restraints

If you are planning to buy or borrow a second-hand restraint, take care to check these points:

- Is it approved? Seats which have not been approved could be dangerous.
- Don't use any child restraint that has obvious signs of wear on the straps or if the plastic shell or buckle is cracked or broken.
- Test the buckle and adjusters to make sure they work.
- Obtain fitting instructions (manufacturers can supply copies on request).

The Law on Child Restraints

While there are different laws throughout the world, all children should use a child restraint appropriate to their size and weight.

We strongly encourage that children under one year old must use a child restraint which is appropriate for their weight and size. For a child one year of age or older, a seat belt may be used, however, your child will be safer in a crash if he or she uses a child restraint designed for a child of his/her weight.

As a driver, you should always make sure that any child passengers are securely restrained. Make it a rule never to carry your children or those of friends and relatives, unrestrained in your car. Teach your child always to ask to wear a seat belt.

When a Child Doesn't Want to Wear a Restraint

Some children simply refuse to put on their child restraints. Here are some tips on ways to deal with the problem. Some Road Safety Authorities have specific information that can help you:

- Tell your child the rule about child restraints and always stick to it. Make sure the child knows that a restraint must be used on every trip, however short.
- Encourage the right behaviour by praise or reward. Give some small reward for being helpful while you do up the seat belt or for keeping the belt done up. Reward good behaviour with lots of attention.
- Keep the child entertained. Talk as you drive, or point out sights through the window, even have a sing along. Anything that prevents boredom is helpful, but make sure you don't get distracted in your driving.

For more information on child restraints, contact SafeDrive International (SDI), via Simon Williams on +971 50 625 9282 or email: simon.williams@safedriveint.com

Recognition: Traffic Authority New South Wales