

## fact sheet

### The Facts \*\*

The single biggest cause of death and injury to children in Australia is road accidents. In Queensland alone, 42 children under the age of 11 were killed in car accidents between 1996 and 2005. In addition a further 4000 were hospitalized or received medical treatment.

### Types of injuries

Road trauma accounts for 40% of childhood deaths. The major cause of road trauma is the child not wearing a proper restraint or seat belt. Research has shown that approved and properly fitted child restraints may reduce the risk of death or serious injury in road crashes by up to 70%. \*\*\*

### QLD Legislation – Seat Belt Laws Summary\*\*

**Babies** weighing less than 9kg must be protected in an approved infant restraint (for example baby capsule).

**Children** weighing between 9-26kg (roughly at age seven) should be restrained in an appropriate Standards Australia approved child restraint. As a guide, children weighing more than 26kg are suitable for the standard approved seat belts used by adults.

### Your responsibilities

The driver is responsible and risks a fine of \$A225 and three demerit points for ignoring these laws PER CHILD. The only exemptions are for:

- Taxis and private hire vehicles where no restraint is supplied.
- On medical grounds where a certificate is provided by a doctor.



**Remember, an exemption does not mean you are safe.**

If more than one seat belt offence occurs within a 12 month period, an additional three demerit points will apply. The additional demerit point penalty will apply to driver related offences for seat belts, and rider related offences for helmets.

### AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS – AS/NZS 1754



Australian Standard  
AS/NZS 1754  
SAC  
Standards Australia

All child restraints sold in Australia must meet the strict requirements of the AS: 1754 covering the materials, design, construction, performance, testing and labelling of child restraints.

Restraints bought in other countries will not meet the Australian Standard - it is inadvisable to use them in Australia. For further information contact Kidsafe or your insurer. The AS symbol certifies that the restraint fully meets the Standard.

### Where Children Must Ride

#### Can my child sit in the front passenger seat?

Research clearly demonstrates that persons traveling in the front passenger seat of a motor vehicle are at significantly greater risk of severe injury and/or death in the event of a crash. Children may legally ride in the front of a motor vehicle if they are correctly restrained, however, Kidsafe does not recommend children under the age of 10-12 sit in the front seat.

### Safe in the Centre

Where possible position your child in the rear centre position. This position offers protection from side impact. This may not always be possible if:

- The rear seat folds down in a 50/50 split
- The seat has a raised centre hump
- The driver's seat rests on the **rearward child restraint**

In these cases, the rear left passenger seat is the most suitable option as this is usually the off road/footpath side of the car.

### Seatbelts

- A person must occupy a seat position with a belt where one is provided.
- Do not allow children to share a seat belt.
- Never nurse a child on your lap whilst travelling in a motor vehicle.

### Airbags

Front seat driver and passenger airbags are designed to cushion adults in an accident, they deploy at 320km/h to an adult's chest height. Rear seat side curtain airbags are usually designed to inflate downwards and should not adversely interfere with children restrained using a properly installed child restraint which provides adequate head protection.

Kidsafe recommends that:

- Children under 12 years of age should not sit in the front seat with an airbag.
- Do not use a child restraint in the front passenger seat especially where there is an airbag.
- Refer to your car vehicle owners manual for further information on the airbags in your vehicle.

### Cargo space or open load

No one is permitted to ride in the cargo space of all vehicles including utilities. Loose objects become dangerous missiles in a crash, striking with up to 20 times their own force. Heavy objects should be placed hard against the back seat to prevent accelerated forward force on impact.

- Keep the back shelf under rear window free of loose articles, even tissue boxes.
- Install a cargo barrier/curtain in station wagons, hatchbacks, 4-Wheel drives and panel vans

### In case of an accident

If a restraint has been involved in a severe crash where the main body structure of the car is damaged, the child restraint should be destroyed even if there is no obvious damage. Inform your car insurer of the type and number of child restraints used in your vehicle to ensure compensation for replacement after an accident. It is also important to replace seat belts where they have been used in a crash.

### Choosing a Child Restraint

When choosing a restraint you need to ensure the restraint suits your child, car and individual needs. In particular, the size of the seating positions (Space between the seatbelt and it's connection), and the distance between the back of the front seats and the back of the rear seat (Especially for Infant seats)



### Effectiveness of Child Car Restraints

The Henderson Report (1994) identified incorrect fitting of restraints into cars as the major risk factor for injury to children involved in road crashes. The majority of children correctly restrained in a crash suffered only minor injuries.

A study conducted by the Health Department of WA found

- 40% of children using restraints inappropriate for their size and weight,
- Children had been placed prematurely into adult seatbelts
- Lap belts are an incomplete restraint

An RACQ survey\* also revealed problems with only 25% of children found to be seated ideally. Common problems found include:

- Seatbelt twisted or incorrect configuration
- Incorrectly fitted harness, either too loose to restrain a child or not adjusted to the child's shoulder height
- Top tether not done up or not centrally located behind the child restraint
- Anchorage assembly faults

### Second Hand Restraints

It is illegal to sell any restraint that does not comply with AS 1754

#### What to look for in 2<sup>nd</sup> hand restraints:

1. Australian Standard sticker AS/NZS 1754
2. An instruction booklet
3. Complete set of fittings
4. Check the history of the restraint. Confirm with the previous owner the restraint has **NOT** been in a car crash.
5. Check the date stamped in the plastic mould on the back of the restraint. Do not use if the restraint is older than ten years.
6. Look for stress marks on the plastic mould. These appear like white lines (the same lines you get if you twist a plastic milk bottle) Do not use if there are a lot of stress lines, splits, cracks or broken areas. Avoid rusted restraints or harnesses.
7. Check harnessing and tethering for small frays or tears. A tear or fray as small as 5 mm is a weak point in the harnessing.
8. Check tethering for mould. Little black spots indicate mould is rotting the webbing at these points.

### I have a restraint that is ten years old:

It is not recommended that a child restraint be used after ten years of age because:

- Restraints older than ten years cannot be guaranteed to perform as they were originally intended
- The Australian Standards have been improved since 1991 and updated in 1995, 2000 & 2004. Older restraints will not meet new improved design features.

### Which Restraint do I use?

All child restraints are tested to mass limits therefore weight and height are the most important factors when determining which restraint to use.

### INFANTS

- Birth up to 9kg (some restraints will take children up to 12kg)
- Up to 700 mm in length
- 6 months of age with good head control

### Use either

- Baby Safety Capsule
- A convertible restraint - Rearward Facing

### TODDLERS - YOUNG CHILDREN

- Weighing 8kg – 18 kg
- Approximately 6 months to 3/4 years
- Shoulder level less than or equal to 2.5 cm above the top harness adjustment level
- Eye level must be lower than the back of the restraint.

### Use either

- A convertible restraint 0-4 years
- Forward facing toddler seat
- A combination restraint (8kg to 26kg)
- Continue to use the toddler restraint until the child is either too tall or has reached 18kg

### PRE-PRIMARY AGED CHILDREN AND OLDER

- Weight 14kg-26 kg
- Approximately 3-7 years

### Use Booster seat

- A high back booster seat, with wide side wings and a sash locator
- Consider purchasing a booster seat which has additional safety features e.g. an anti-submarine clip
- Use a safety harness with a booster seat for children weighing up to 26 kg. Ensure the lap belt is tightened first then adjust the harness.
- Do not use a booster seat or cushion seat with a lap only seatbelt.

### When do I move a child to the next type of restraint?

For the best possible protection always use the restraint most suitable to the child's age, size and weight and which conforms to the current Australian Standard (AS 1754).

Key points:

- Adjust harness straps as child grows. The shoulder straps must be in the slots which are nearest to the child's shoulder and not lower than the child's shoulders. The correct crotch strap position should be in line with the child's crotch to prevent slipping.
- Do not move the child out of their restraint too soon. Contact Kidsafe or your local child health centre to determine whether they are ready to move to the next stage of restraint.

### Anchorage Points

If you do not have anchorage points in your vehicle or cannot find them, contact Kidsafe Qld for assistance and information.

\*Visit the RACQ website [www.racq.com.au](http://www.racq.com.au) for more information on child restraints and fittings.

\*\*Statistics courtesy of QLD Transport. Visit [www.transport.qld.gov.au](http://www.transport.qld.gov.au) for more information on seat belt laws.

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Toddler Restraint



Combination Restraint



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