

fact sheet

Motor Vehicle occupant injury: The statistics

In South Australia during 2002:

- 108 children under 12 years old were involved in motor vehicle accidents.

Of those 108 children

- 3 children were fatally injured.
- 31 children were admitted to hospital.
- 47 children were treated at hospital but were not admitted.
- Private doctors treated 27 children.

Of the three children who were fatally injured:

- 2 children were not wearing restraints.

There is evidence that:-

Of the 31 children admitted to hospital:

- 17 children were wearing restraints.
- 7 children were not wearing restraints.

Of the 47 children treated at hospital, but not admitted:

- 28 children were wearing restraints.
- 2 children were not wearing restraints.

Of the 27 children treated by private doctors:

- 20 children were wearing restraints.
- 4 children were not wearing restraints.

Types of injuries

Superficial injuries and bruising were the most common injuries

Unrestrained children were more likely to sustain head injuries than restrained children.

SA Legislation

SA Law requires drivers to ensure all children up to 16 years of age travelling in their motor vehicle are restrained in an approved child restraint or seat belt.

Children under one year of age must be restrained in an Australian Standard AS: 1754 child restraint, suitable for the child's size and weight when travelling in a motor vehicle.

Approved child restraints are marked with the code AS: 1754 and must be correctly anchored to the vehicle using an Australian Standard anchorage system.

The child restraint must be appropriately adjusted and fitted to the child using the restraint at all times.

If a child under 16 is not restrained correctly the driver is fined \$169 and loses THREE DEMERIT POINTS per child!

Exempt

Taxis and vintage cars are exempt from child restraints. This does not mean you are safe.

AUSTRALIAN STANDARDS - AS 1754

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 illegal to use them in Australia.

The symbol below 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 travelling 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.

Kidsafe does not recommend children under the age of 10-12 sit in the front seat.

Safe in the Centre

Kidsafe SA, and other road safety experts, recommend that children travel in the rear centre position as the preferred option. This position offers protection from side impact.

The child restraint/safety harness may not be able to be placed in the centre rear seat position due to either: -

- 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 is a suitable option allowing for parent's ease of access.

Child Car Restraints

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

Airbags are designed to cushion adults in an accident; they deploy at 320km/h to an adult's chest height.

In the USA, passenger side airbags have been implicated in the deaths of 21 children, including six infants in rearward facing child restraints.

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.

Cargo space or open load

No one is permitted to ride in the cargo space of utilities.

Loose objects become dangerous missiles in a crash, striking with up to 20 times their own force.

- Keep the cargo space or parcel shelf free of loose articles, even tissue boxes.
- Install a cargo barrier 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 in your vehicle, to ensure compensation.

Choosing a Child Restraint

When choosing a restraint you need to ensure the restraint suits your child, car and individual needs.

In particular, check the size of the seating positions (space between the seatbelt and its connection), and the distance between the back of the front seats and the back of the rear seat (especially for infant seats).

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Effectiveness of Child Car Restraints

A correctly fitted child car restraint, appropriate for the child's age and weight, can reduce the risk of serious injury or death in road crashes by up to 70%.

The majority of children correctly restrained in a crash suffered only minor or trivial 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.

Why Children are at Risk

Children incorrectly or inappropriately restrained remain at greater risk of serious injury in a motor vehicle collision.

The Henderson Report (1994) identified incorrect fitting of restraints into cars as the major risk factor for injury to children involved in road crashes.

Child restraint checking services have found:

- 62% (189 of 303 cases) of restraints checked with one or more fitting faults (Kidsafe WA, 1998).
- 69% (n=4,641) of restraints with fitting faults (RACV 1996-1999).

The main problems were:

- 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 child restraint.
- Anchorage assembly faults.

Incorrect installation can lead to increased risk of injury and increased severity of injury.

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 and 2000. Older restraints will not meet new improved design features.

Second Hand Restraints

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

What to look for in 2nd hand restraints:

1. Australian Standard sticker AS 1754.
2. An instruction booklet.
3. Complete set of fittings.
4. Check the history of the restraint. Ask the previous owner if the restraint has 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 stress lines, splits, cracks or broken areas
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.

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
- 700 mm in length
- 6 months of age with good head control

Use either

- Baby Safety Capsule
- A convertible restraint



Traditional Capsule



Convertible



Travel System

Child Car Restraints

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 – 18kgs (approximately 0 – 4 years).
- Forward facing toddler seat
- A combination restraint (8kg to 26kg)
- Remain using the toddler restraint until the child is either too tall or has reached 18kg.



Toddler



Combination

Pre-primary aged children and older

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

Choosing a Booster seat

- Look for a high back booster seat, with wide side wings and a sash locator.
- Select a booster with 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 lap belt only.



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