

**RESTRAINING
CHILDREN WITH
DISABILITIES IN
MOTOR VEHICLES**

**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT
ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, MELBOURNE**

RESTRAINING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN MOTOR VEHICLES

The following guidelines are used by the occupational therapists at the Royal Children's Hospital and are based on the Australian Standard **AS/NZS 4370:1996 – Restraint of children with disabilities in motor vehicles.**

It is recommended that all therapists prescribing car seating for children with disabilities refer directly to this Standard.

This Standard covers children who weigh up to 45kg.

The Australian Standard **AS/NZS 1754:2000 – Child restraint systems for use in motor vehicles** is also referred to throughout these guidelines.

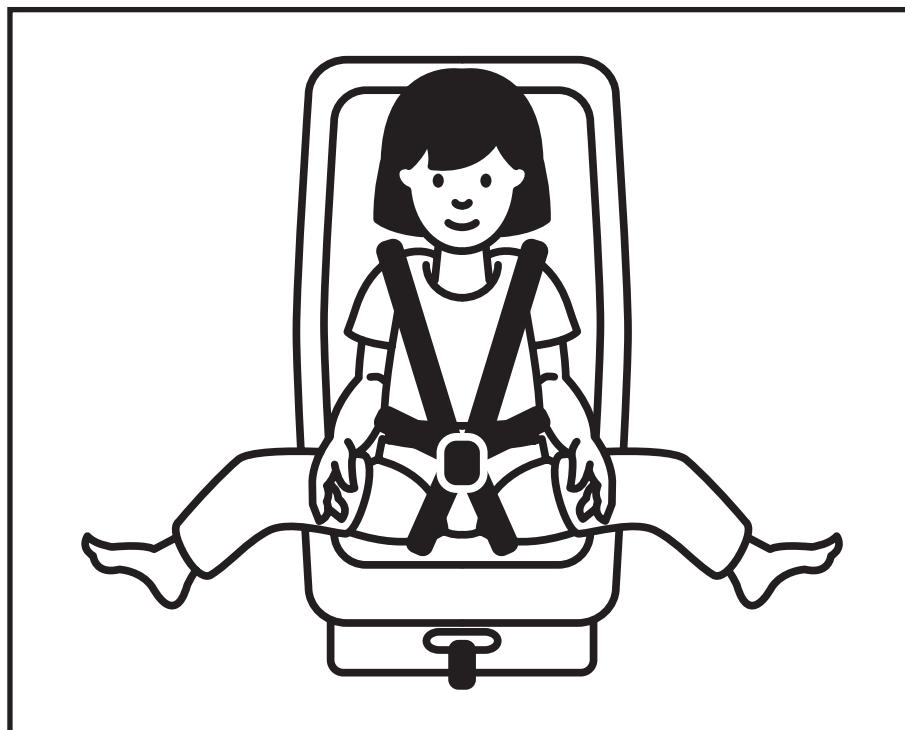
Please note: The Road Rules of Victoria-1999 (266/267) emphasizes that all children under the age of 16 must be suitably restrained unless they have exemption from a medical practitioner.

INTRODUCTION

Children with disabilities present many challenges for safe motor vehicle transport. Therapists and other staff members involved with car seating issues need to find creative solutions to ensure the most suitable option is found for each child.

The major issues that need to be considered are:

- restraint of the child safely and comfortably
- transference of the child into and out of the motor vehicle.



GENERAL GUIDELINES WHEN PRESCRIBING A RESTRAINT

1. Always use a child restraint which complies with the Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754 as a first option. (Australian Standards Approved restraints are identifiable by a Standards Australia 5 Ticks symbol.)
2. Where an AS/NZS 1754 approved restraint cannot be used in its original form, trial other options in order of preference as specified in AS/NZS 4370.
3. Advise the carer of any known risks to the child's safety of the option choice. This advice should include:
 - a) whether the restraint complies with AS/NZS 1754
 - b) whether the restraint has been modified and to what extent
 - c) why other options are not suitable.
4. Demonstrate the installation and use of the restraint option to the carers.
5. Ensure the carer is able to safely transfer the child into and out of the vehicle using the prescribed restraint option.
6. Provide written information to the carer which includes:
 - a) instructions for the installation and use of the restraint in its modified form
 - b) the words 'This restraint is to be used only by the child for whom it was modified'.
 - c) the words 'Do not carry out further modifications to this child restraint without reference to the person who prescribed the modification'.
7. Document all action taken.
8. Where an AS/NZS 1754 approved restraint cannot be used, a medical certificate or letter is required which exempts the child from using such a restraint. (Refer to example letter).
NB. Any modification to a restraint constitutes non-compliance with AS/NZS 1754 and therefore requires a medical exemption.
9. If there are no suitable options a Maxi-Taxi or, as a last resort, an ambulance will need to be considered.

GUIDELINES FOR MODIFYING A RESTRAINT

- Do not modify anchor fittings or motor vehicle anchorage points.
- Do not modify the webbing straps or attachment clips.
- Do not modify the foam/plastic shell of a child car seat.
- Additional padding should only be used if it is essential for specific positioning purposes.
- The padding beneath and behind the child should be firm (eg high-density foam), as soft padding will compress in a crash.
- Padding should not exceed 2kgs in total weight.
- Padding should be fire retardant so as to comply with the material requirements of AS/NZS 1754.
- Folded nappies or towels are suitable for use as lateral support.

ANCHORAGE POINTS

If a car is not fitted with a bolt attachment it is recommended that the carer visit a RACV/VicRoads Approved Restraint Fitting Station. (Contact the RACV advisory line 03 9790 2190 for the nearest fitting station).

When using a car seat restrained by a bolt, the total weight of the seat and child (including plaster cast) should not exceed 27kg. Where there is no seat attached to the bolt, and a harness attached to the bolt restrains the child, the total weight should not exceed 32kg.

If the child is heavier than the above weight limits and the condition is short term, then a letter from the doctor is required as the child is no longer being restrained in an approved manner. If the child is heavier than the above weight limits and a long-term solution is required then a Child Restraint Anchorage Bar (CRAB bar) will need to be fitted.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information contact:

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Vicroads

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RACV

Ph: 03 9790 2190

www.racv.com.au

This information is accurate as of July 2000. It is important, however, to be aware that standards change and new products are continually being developed.