

Fact sheet

Centre for Community Child Health

Travelling safely with your child

Car accidents are one of the leading causes of child death in Australia. Using the child restraint in the car properly – for all trips, no matter how short – is one of the best ways to reduce the risk of injury for your child.

We know that there can be things that make it harder for you to use child restraints and that knowing when to change your child into a new one – or out of them completely – can be tricky to figure out.

There are some basic guidelines that are essential for the use of child restraints:

- Always use a child restraint in the car in a manner that adheres to the law in your state or territory.
- Check the child restraint before every trip to make sure it's secure and the straps aren't twisted.
- Make sure that your child is in the right child restraint for their age and size.

Seatbelts without tears

Using the child restraint properly is tricky if your child refuses to wear one. There are steps that you can take to make sure that your child knows that they have to be in their child restraint in the car and that there can be no negotiation!

Your child needs to know:

- the rules about child restraints and that there will not be exceptions
- that following the rules will earn them praise.

To maximise your chances of seatbelt use without a tantrum you can:

- choose the right time to start your trip, try to avoid times when you're going to interrupt your child's usual routine
- model seatbelt-wearing by always ensuring that you buckle up in the car



- explain the rules to your child in an age-appropriate way
- talk about what you're doing as you buckle them in so there are no surprises
- do something special with the child restraint – such as add stickers – to make it an interesting place to be
- ensure that where the child seat is placed in the car allows your child to see you
- praise good behaviour
- chat with your child on the journey
- keep an eye on your child so you can respond quickly if they undo the safety harness
- do not start or continue the journey if your child undoes the buckle.

With a few different tactics in place, you can make car trips safer and easier for the whole family.



Using child restraints

Your child will need a different type of child restraint depending on how old and how tall they are. Child restraints manufactured in the last three years all have a shoulder marker on them to help you to know when your child is tall enough for the next size up.

When you think that your child is ready to move out of a child restraint completely, this simple list might help:

1. Can your child sit with their back against the seat back?
2. Can they sit with their knees bent comfortably over the front edge of the seat?
3. When they're sitting, is the seatbelt lying across the middle of their shoulder?
4. Does the seatbelt sit comfortably over their lap and low across their thighs?
5. Can your child stay that way for the whole trip or do they change to an unsafe position if they fall asleep, for example?

If the answer to any of those questions is no, then your child cannot safely move out of child restraints in the car.

Short videos about using child restraints

Watch a series of short videos online to help you learn more about using restraints correctly. These videos are available in Arabic, Khmer, Dari, Karen, Persian and Somali as well as English. They're available at www.racv.com.au/childrestraints or search online for Nino's Child Restraint Challenge.

All child restraints used in Australia must meet the Australian Design Standards, be fitted properly and be used in a way

that adheres to the law in your state or territory. There are authorised fitting stations all over Australia to help you to ensure that your child restraint is secured properly in your car.

For more help in your state or territory, go to:

ACT:

Rego ACT: www.rego.act.gov.au/

Kidsafe ACT: www.kidsafeact.com.au/

NSW:

Transport NSW: www.transport.nsw.gov.au/

Kidsafe NSW: www.kidsafensw.org/

NT:

Road Safety NT: transport.nt.gov.au/safety/road-safety/for-parents/child-restraints

Kidsafe NT: www.kidsafent.com.au/

QLD:

Transport QLD: www.tmr.qld.gov.au/

Kidsafe QLD: www.kidsafeqld.com.au/

SA:

Transport SA: www.sa.gov.au/topics/transport-travel-and-motoring

Kidsafe SA: www.kidsafesa.com.au/

TAS:

Transport Tasmania: www.transport.tas.gov.au/

Kidsafe Tasmania: www.kidsafetas.com.au/

VIC:

VicRoads: www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/

Kidsafe Victoria: www.kidsafevic.com.au/

WA:

Road Safety WA: www.ors.wa.gov.au/

Kidsafe WA: www.kidsafewa.com.au/

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