

FACTSHEET

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Child car restraints

What are child car restraints?

Child car restraints are seats designed to increase the safety of children travelling in a motor vehicle, especially in the event of an accident. Child car restraints have proven to be safer for children than adult seat belts.

There are a number of child car restraints available. Your child's age and size will determine which child restraint is most appropriate. A guide to help you choose an appropriate restraint is provided below. Use this in conjunction with manufacturer recommendations.

Birth to 6 months

Infant restraints are to be used from birth through to approximately six months of age. These are rearward facing restraints. The restraint allows your baby to travel in a semi-reclined position with a built-in harness to secure them.

Aged 6 months up to 4 years

Rearward or forward facing child restraints are to be used from 6 months to approximately 4 years of age. These restraints are designed to hold young children who are able to support their head while seated.

Aged 4 years up to 7 years

Forward facing seats called Boosters are suited for children aged 4-7 years. These are raised seats that may or may not be equipped with a back rest. They are used in combination with the adult lap sash belt.

Convertible restraints combine two or more of the above features and can therefore be used for a longer period of time by changing the mode, as required.

When your child reaches a height of at least 145cm, they can safely use an adult lap-sash seat belt.

How are children injured?

Child car restraints are safety devices designed to reduce the incidence and severity of injuries in the event of a car crash. However, incorrect use of the devices will offer less protection, especially during an accident.

How common are these injuries?

Transport incidents are associated with a significant number of child deaths and injuries. In Australia, between 2002 and 2012, 93,778 children aged 0-16 years suffered injuries as a result of transport incidents.¹ In the 2016/17 financial year, 502 children were admitted to Sydney Children's Hospitals Network for transport related injuries.²

What are the laws, regulations or standards for child car restraints?

The law, *Road Rules 2008: Part 16 'Rules for persons travelling in or on vehicles'*, states that all child car restraints sold in Australia must comply with Australian Standard AS 1754 - 'Child restraint systems for use in motor vehicles', depending on when it was manufactured.

The law states the following:

- The driver of a car is responsible for ensuring that children under the age of 16 years are appropriately restrained.

- Children under 7 years must be secured in a child restraint or booster seat when travelling in a vehicle.
- Babies up to 6 months of age must be restrained in a rearward facing restraint; Children aged 6 months to less than 4 years must be restrained in a rearward or forward facing restraint; Children from 4 to less than 7 years of age must use a forward facing restraint or booster seat.
- Children under 4 years of age must not be in the front row of a vehicle with 2 or more rows. Children aged 4 years to less than 7 years can only sit in the front row of the vehicle when all other seats are occupied by children of a lesser age in approved child restraints.

References

¹ Mitchell R, Curtis K, Foster K. A 10 year review of the characteristics and health outcomes for injury-related hospitalisations of children in Australia. Day of Difference Foundation. University of Sydney. 5th May 2017.

² Kids Health Child Health Promotion Unit, Injury-related hospital admissions to Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. (2016-2017). Sydney Children's Hospitals Network. 2019.

Remember:

The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommends that you use an age and size appropriate restraint for your child from birth up to 145cm tall, after which time they may use the adult seat belt. A suitable restraint will offer more protection for your child, in the event of a motor vehicle accident.

The Hospital also recommends that children aged 12 years and under ride in the back seat of a vehicle, as it is safer than the front seat. Children may also be injured when passenger airbags deploy, causing severe injuries to young children seated in the front seat of a vehicle.

- Purchase and use child car restraints that meet the Australian Standard AS 1754, depending on when it was manufactured.
- Do not use a restraint that is more than 10 years old or one that has been involved in a crash. These may have damages that you cannot see.
- If you are using a second hand restraint, ensure that the straps are not damaged, the plastic shell and buckle are not broken or cracked and that all mechanisms are in working order.
- When you choose a restraint, make sure that it is appropriate for the age and size of your child.
- Always follow instructions when installing a restraint in your vehicle. If you need assistance, contact an RMS approved fitting station.
- Always place children in the back seat of your car. In the event of an accident, it is much safer to be seated in the back seat than in the front.
- If your child's eye-level is higher than the back of the child seat when they are seated upright, it is time to move them to the next stage of the restraints.
- When your child no longer requires a booster seat, they should use a lap-sash belt, when available, as this is safer than a lap-only seat belt.
- For further information, visit the RMS website on: <https://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/children/childcarseats/index.html>)
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead recommends that you check for products that have been recalled (www.recalls.gov.au) prior to buying or borrowing an item for use with your child.