

Seat Belt Safety

Top five myths and facts about seat belts

Myth #1: I don't need to wear a seat belt when driving at slow speeds or on short trips.

Fact: Most crash deaths occur within 25 miles of home and at speeds of less than 40 mph.

Did You Know? Fatal injuries to unrestrained motorists have occurred in vehicles traveling as slow as 12 mph. An unbelted person hitting a windshield in a 40-mph crash would feel the same force as hitting the ground after falling off a five-story building.

Myth #2: If I wear a seat belt, I might get trapped in my car if it catches on fire or becomes submerged under water.

Fact: Crashes involving fire or water occur in less than one half of one percent of all crashes. The greatest danger to vehicle occupants is from the impact of the crash itself.

Did You Know? Those wearing a seat belt are more likely to be uninjured and conscious after a crash, allowing them to get out of the vehicle quickly.

Myth #3: If I don't wear a seat belt I'm not affecting anyone but myself. If I'm injured or die in a crash from not wearing a seat belt, that's my business!

Fact: Deaths and injuries that result from non-use of seat belts cost everyone in the form of higher insurance premiums, medical costs, property damage, and loss of productivity. Plus, the emotional cost to victims' families is too great to measure.

Did You Know? Kentuckians pay over \$2 billion each year for car crash victims. Citizens not involved in crashes pay three-fourths of that cost.

Myth #4: I don't need to wear a seat belt because my vehicle has air bags.

Fact: Air bags are designed to work in combination with seat belts, providing supplemental protection during certain types of crashes. Seat belts help to properly position occupants to maximize the airbags' benefits and help restrain occupants during the initial impact and any following collisions.

Did You Know? Air bags inflate at a speed of over 100 mph. An unrestrained or improperly restrained occupant can be seriously injured or killed by the force of an activated air bag.

Myth #5: I might be saved if I'm thrown clear of the crash.

Fact: Being thrown to safety in a crash is almost impossible. Your best bet for survival is to be securely held in place by the seat belt.

Did You Know? You are 25 times more likely to be killed in a crash when thrown from a vehicle. You may be thrown through the windshield and into another vehicle or fixed object, scraped along the pavement, or even crushed by your own vehicle.

Do seat belts really help in a crash?

Yes! Seat belts are the most effective safety feature on vehicles; however, nearly one in five Americans fail to buckle up. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, seat belts, when worn correctly, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For pickup trucks, SUVs and van occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to critical injury by 65 percent.



How do I correctly wear a seat belt?

Properly fastened seat belts contact the strongest parts of the body, such as the chest, hips, and shoulders. This allows the restraint to spread crash forces over a wide area of the body, putting less stress on any one part.

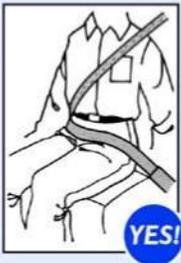
A quick change in speed is what causes injury. A seat belt allows the body to slow down with the crash, extending the time when the crash forces are felt by the occupant.

The Correct Way to Wear a Safety Belt

WEAR IT LOW

■ The lap portion of the safety belt should be two to four inches below the waist, snug across your hip and pelvic bones — NOT across your stomach.

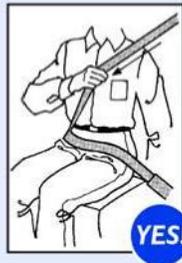
■ In a crash, a belt worn too high on the abdomen places you at high risk of potentially fatal internal injuries.



WEAR IT SNUG

■ The shoulder portion should rest smoothly over your collarbone and across your chest and shoulders. Pull the belt out and let it retract to remove slack.

■ Safety belt webbing will stretch slightly in a crash. If not snug before the crash, you may slide under and out or up and over the belt.



WEAR IT RIGHT

■ If the belt rubs against the neck, try changing the seat position or the way you sit.

■ Some vehicles have a shoulder belt adjusters which slide up or down to provide a correct, comfortable fit.

■ Belt extenders may also be purchased.

■ Some cars feature a shoulder belt that automatically comes across your chest, but you must fasten the lap portion manually to achieve proper use.

■ Safety belts should be worn over the front of the shoulder, never behind your back or under your arm.



GUIDELINES FOR USE OF ALL CAR SEAT TYPES

- Safety seats should be firmly installed. To test, grasp and tug the seat where it is connected at the belt path or near lower anchors. The seat should not move more than one inch side to side, forward and backward.
- Harness straps should lie flat and snug against the child's body with no slack in the webbing.
- The chest clip should be placed at armpit level.

Car Seat Use After a Crash

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration recommends that car seats be replaced following a moderate or severe crash in order to ensure a continued high level of crash protection for child passengers. Go to www.safercar.gov/parents for further information or consult your car seat owner's manual.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Go to www.chp.ca.gov, Programs & Services, or contact your local California Highway Patrol (CHP) office for assistance with the installation of your child passenger restraint system.

The CHP Also Offers the Following:

- Child Safety Seat Check-Up Events.
- Traffic Safety Presentations.
- Disposal of Child Safety Seats at CHP offices.

IT'S THE LAW

California law states that each child SHALL be properly restrained in a child safety seat, booster seat, or other restraint system in the back seat until the child is eight years old OR at least 4'9" in height.

California law, effective January 1, 2017, states that children under two years of age shall ride rear-facing.

Why Ride Rear Facing?

The car seat law was changed to reflect what studies have shown for years. The American Academy of Pediatrics found that children under two years of age are 75 percent less likely to die or to be severely injured in a traffic collision if they are rear-facing. "A rear-facing child safety seat does a better job of supporting the head, neck, and spine of infants and toddlers in a crash because it distributes the force of the collision over the entire body."

Seat Belt Safety Starts With Good Role Models

Children imitate adults. Be a good example by wearing your seat belt consistently and without exception. Start a lifelong habit with baby's first ride. Insist the vehicle will not move until everyone in the car is buckled up.



CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY LAWS & GUIDELINES



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REAR-FACING CAR SEATS

Newborns and Toddlers

CALIFORNIA LAW EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2017: Children under two years of age shall ride rear-facing. Exceptions: the child is over 40 pounds or over 40 inches in height.

- Rear-Facing Only Seats (Infant Only)—Should only be used in a rear-facing position.
- Convertible Car Seat—A convertible car seat can be used in both rear-facing and change to a forward-facing position as the child grows.
- Rear-facing car seats should be placed in the back seat of a vehicle.
- NEVER place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active airbag.
- Placing newborns and toddlers in seats that are rear-facing is 5 times safer than forward-facing seats. Children are safer staying rear-facing, until they reach the upper height and weight limits of their particular car seat.
- Harness straps should be at or below the child's shoulders.



FORWARD-FACING CAR SEATS (WITH A HARNESS)

Young Children

Three car seat options are available—convertible, combination, and safety harness:

- Convertible Car Seat—Most can be used rear-facing past two years of age, and can be turned around to a forward-facing position to accommodate a growing child. (Refer to manufacturer guidelines for exact weight and height limits).
- Combination Car Seat—Can be used as a forward-facing car seat and adapted to a booster seat as the child grows. Harness straps should be at or above the child's shoulders.
- Safety harnesses are an acceptable alternative to a booster seat. Check the labels to confirm it meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards.



BELT-POSITIONING BOOSTER CAR SEAT

Older Children

According to California law, children are required to be properly secured in an appropriate child passenger restraint (booster seat) until their eighth birthday or they reach 4'9" in height.

Booster seats are designed to raise the child up to allow proper fit of the adult lap and shoulder belt.

ADULT SEAT BELT

Children are permitted to use a seat belt when they have passed their eighth birthday; however, the seat belt should be checked for proper fit. The child should be able to sit all the way back in the vehicle seat, with knees bending comfortably over the edge of the seat, the shoulder portion of the belt laying across the collar bone and chest, and the lap belt low on the hips across the tops of the thighs. The child must be able to stay seated properly for the entire trip.