

Frequently Asked Questions

Child car restraint legislation summary

Types of restraints

Children from birth up to the age of six months must be in a rearward facing restraint.

Children from six months up to the age of four years must be in either a rearward or forward facing restraint with an internal five point harness.

Children from four years up to the age of seven years must be restrained in either a forward facing restraint with an internal five point harness or a booster seat restrained by a lap sash seat belt or child safety harness.

Children must exhaust all options available for their current age group before prematurely considering to use a child car restraint from the next age group.

Seating position summary

Children under four years are not allowed to sit in the front seat of a vehicle if the vehicle has two or more rows of seats.

Children aged between four and up to seven years are not permitted to sit in front seats of a vehicle, unless ALL rear seating positions are occupied by children less than seven years of age.

When can I move my baby into a forward facing child car restraint?

- Movement of a baby from rearward facing to forward facing earlier than required is not encouraged, a rearward facing infant restraint should be used until the baby is at least six months old.
- Ideally a child should remain rearward until they reach the upper weight in a pre-2010 AS/NZS 1754 Standard restraint, and when using a AS/NZS 1754:2010 or 2013 restraint must be rearward until they meet the minimum height markers required in forward facing mode.
- It should be noted that the harness straps need to be moved to different slot positions as the baby grows. In a rearward facing restraint, the harness straps must be a maximum of 25mm above or level with the baby's shoulders, not below.

When can I move my child into a booster seat?

- Children from approximately six months to four years should use forward facing child car restraint with five point internal harness,
- Children using a restraint from a pre-2010 AS/NZS 1754 Standard should cease using the restraint once they exceed 18 kilograms, if under 4 years of age, these children will then need to use a AS/NZS 1754:2010 or 2013 standard restraint,

- A child aged four years and above can use a booster seat once the minimum height and/or weight limits are met for the booster seat being used,
- Unlike a rearward facing restraint, it is fine for the harness straps of a forward facing child car restraint to range from 25 millimetres below or above the child's shoulders,
- When buying a booster, it is recommended that buyers choose one that has a back, a firm base and side wings, with a sash guide to position the seat belt correctly on the occupant's shoulder.

What is a combination seat?

- A combination seat is a combination of a forward facing child car restraint and a booster seat. It attaches to the vehicle with a tether strap and has a five point inbuilt harness.
- The child uses the harness from six months until they reach a minimum of four years of age and have reached the minimum size requirement for the restraint to be used in booster mode. Then the harness tucks away inside the restraint and the lap sash seat belt is used as in an ordinary booster until the child is at least seven years.

When can I move my child to an adult seat belt without a booster?

- A booster should be used until EITHER: the child is at least seven years of age OR the child's shoulders are above the upper limit of all AS/NZS:2010 and 2013 Standard boosters.
- To tell whether the adult seat belt fits a child, the child needs to be placed in the chosen seating position and check that the sash part of the seat belt sits flat on the shoulder and does not come in contact with the child's face or neck.
- Lap sash seat belts offer far greater protection than lap only belts. Because children are far more fragile than adults, putting them in a position that has a lap belt only should be avoided.
- When fitted correctly a lap sash seat belt does not come into contact with the face or neck.

What if a restraint has been in a crash?

- The Standard for Child Restraints, AS/NZS 1754, requires manufacturers to include in their restraint instruction booklets the words: "Destroy the restraint if it has been in a severe crash, even if no damage is visible." A severe crash is one where the body structure of the vehicle has been distorted.

Are second hand restraints safe?

- If you are considering purchasing a second hand restraint, you need to be assured of the history of the restraint and that it has not been involved in a crash. If you cannot be assured of the restraint history, it would be unwise to purchase a second hand restraint.

How do I know if my car has anchor points for a child car restraint?

- The best way to check if your car has anchor points for a child car restraint is to check the car owner's manual.
- The index will list child car restraints and you can then check where the anchorage points are in your vehicle.
- As a quick guide most sedans manufactured after 1st July 1976, station wagons manufactured after 1st January 1977, light passenger vans (up to 12 seats) manufactured after January 1986, 4WDs manufactured after July 1990 and some late model commercial vehicles and utes are likely to have child car restraint anchorage points.
- If in doubt, it is recommended to call the vehicle manufacturer for anchorage point locations.
- The Department of Transport authorises Type 2 Fitting Stations to install after-market anchorage points, visit Type 2 Fitters for more information.

What if I am travelling in a Taxi?

- Some taxis have restraints available but you will need to book them. Alternatively you can take your own restraint or hire one to take in the taxi.

Contact the Child Car Restraint Fitting Information Line

The Child Restraint Information Line telephone number is 1300 780 713. This service operates from Monday to Friday from 9.00am - 2.00pm (WST).

Child Car Restraint Fitting Information Line

Phone: 1300 780 713 (WST)

Operating hours: Monday to Friday 9am - 2pm

More information is available from <http://www.roadwise.asn.au/child-car-restraints.aspx>