

# Child restraints, booster seats and adult seatbelts

January 2012



Choosing and using the safest  
restraint for your child

## Choosing and using the safest restraint for your child

This brochure has information about:

- choosing the safest restraint for your child
- the latest developments in the Australian standard for child restraints
- restraints for children with additional needs.

It is the law that all children under 16 years of age, when travelling in a motor vehicle in Victoria, must be restrained in a suitable restraint that is properly adjusted and fastened.

The type of restraint will depend on the child's size.

Child restraints and booster seats used in Victoria must comply with the Australian/New Zealand Standard 1754 for child restraints.

Visit [vicroads.vic.gov.au/childrestraints](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au/childrestraints) for the latest list of child restraint products available.





*Rearward facing child restraint*

## Children aged under 6 months

A child aged under 6 months must travel in a rearward facing child restraint.

All rearward facing child restraints must be held in place by the seatbelt and the top tether strap, and must have an inbuilt harness.

Some rearward facing child restraints can be turned around and used as a forward facing child restraint when the child is around 6 to 12 months of age. This type of restraint is often called a convertible restraint.



*Rearward facing child restraint*



*Forward facing child restraint*

## Children aged 6 months to under 4 years

A child aged 6 months to under 4 years must travel in either a rearward facing or forward facing child restraint. The type of restraint will depend on the child's size.

All rearward and forward facing child restraints must be held in place by the seatbelt and the top tether strap, and must have an inbuilt harness.

Some rearward facing child restraints can be turned around and used as a forward facing child restraint when the child is around 6 to 12 months of age.

Only move your child to a forward facing child restraint when they have outgrown their rearward facing child restraint.



*Forward facing child restraint*



## Children aged 4 years to under 7 years

A child aged 4 years to under 7 years must travel in either a forward facing child restraint with an inbuilt harness, or a booster seat. The type of restraint will depend on the child's size.

All forward facing child restraints must be held in place by the seatbelt and the top tether strap, and must have an inbuilt harness.

Some forward facing child restraints can be used as a booster seat by removing the inbuilt harness. This type of restraint is often called a combination restraint.

Only move your child to a booster seat when they have outgrown their forward facing child restraint.

A booster seat can be used with a lap-sash seatbelt or child safety harness. Refer to the restraint manufacturer's instructions.

Booster cushions (with no seat back) are **not recommended** as they provide no protection in a side impact crash.



*Booster seat*



*Adult lap-sash seatbelt*

## Adult seatbelts

Children aged 7 years to under 16 years must travel in either a booster seat, or an adult seatbelt.

A child should continue using a booster seat until they have outgrown it.

An adult lap-sash seatbelt is designed for people with a minimum height of 145 cm. The average child will reach this height between 10 and 12 years of age.

Lap-sash seatbelts offer better protection to passengers than lap-only seatbelts, but they must fit correctly. This means the lap part of the seatbelt is positioned low over the hip and the sash part of the seatbelt sits in the middle of the shoulder and does not touch the neck.



## Choosing the safest restraint for your child

Visit the Child Restraint Evaluation Program (CREP) website at [crep.com.au](http://crep.com.au) to choose the safest restraint for your child. The program rates child restraints and booster seats according to how well they protect your child in a crash, and how easy they are to use.

CREP is supported by VicRoads, RACV, TAC, Transport for NSW, NRMA and RACWA.

## Front and rear seats

If a car has two or more rows of seats, children aged under 4 years must not travel in the front seat.

If all rear seats are being used by children aged under 7 years, children aged 4 years to under 7 years may travel in the front seat, provided they use a booster seat. In this situation you will need to use a booster seat that is manufactured without a tether strap.

If your car does not have a rear row (for example, a ute) children are able to travel in the front row. However, a rearward facing child restraint cannot be used in the front seat where there is a passenger airbag.



## Children with additional needs

There are some exemptions from the child restraint road rules for children with a medical condition or physical disability.

To qualify for an exemption a number of conditions must be met, such as a medical certificate. Parents and carers should seek advice from a health professional, such as an occupational therapist, who can prescribe the restraint which is best for the child.

## Fitting a child restraint or booster seat in your car

Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when fitting a child restraint or booster seat to your car. Using a restraint which has been incorrectly fitted, or is not suitable for your child's size, puts your child at a higher risk of serious injury or death in a crash.

If you need help fitting your restraint, contact the manufacturer or visit a restraint fitting station. To locate your nearest restraint fitting station visit either the RACV or VicRoads websites at [racv.com.au](http://racv.com.au) or [vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au)



## **The Australian and New Zealand Standard: AS/NZS 1754**

The Australian and New Zealand Standard 1754 is one of the most stringent child restraint standards in the world.

Restraints that meet the 1995, 2000, 2004 and 2010 versions of AS/NZS 1754 are legal and can be used in

Victoria. Check the standards sticker on the restraint and restraint packaging to confirm that the restraint complies with AS/NZS 1754.

## **Changes to child restraints and booster seats**

The latest version (2010) of the child restraint standard has introduced selection criteria based on approximate ages and shoulder height markers on the restraint.

Restraints manufactured prior to 2010 used selection criteria based on the child's weight. These restraints are still available and suitable for use.

## **What about size?**

To protect your child in a crash the restraint must be the right size for your child. To ensure that all children are able to travel in the right sized restraint, the road rules allow a child, who is too heavy or tall for the restraint recommended for their age, to use a restraint in the next age category.

## Child safety harness

A child safety harness is purchased as a separate item and attaches to a child restraint anchorage point. A child safety harness is sometimes used with a booster seat or lap-only seatbelt.

A child safety harness is difficult to fit correctly. Do not use a child safety harness where a lap-sash seatbelt is available. Research recommends using a child safety harness only when it is not possible to replace your lap-only seatbelt with a lap-sash seatbelt.

If you do need to use a child safety harness, it is recommended you use a booster seat with an anti-submarining feature to hold the lap part of the seatbelt down low on the child's hips.



*Anti-submarining feature*

## More information

More information about child restraints and booster seats is available from:

**VicRoads:** [vicroads.vic.gov.au/childrestraints](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au/childrestraints)

**Tel:** 13 11 71

**RACV:** [racv.com.au](http://racv.com.au)

**Tel:** (03) 9790 2190  
1800 134 126

**Kidsafe:** [kidsafevic.com.au](http://kidsafevic.com.au)

**Tel:** (03) 9251 7725

**TAC:** [howsafeisyourcar.com.au](http://howsafeisyourcar.com.au)

