



Child restraints, booster seats and seatbelt readiness

October 2016

Choosing and using the safest restraint for your child

This brochure has information about:

- choosing the safest restraint for your child
- 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 age and size.

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

For more information visit
vicroads.vic.gov.au



Rearward facing child restraint with tether strap

Children from birth

By law, a child aged under 6 months must travel in a rearward facing child restraint. Every child is unique and develops at different rates so when a child reaches 6 months of age it does not necessarily mean that they are ready to be placed in a forward facing child restraint.

Wait until the child has outgrown their rearward facing restraint before you turn it around.

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

Many child restraints are convertible and can be turned around and used as a forward facing child restraint when the child is between 6 and 12 months of age. However there are child restraints on the market that allow children to remain in rear facing child restraints until they are 2-3 years old.



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 with an inbuilt harness. The type of restraint will depend on the child's size.

All forward facing child restraints **MUST** be held in place by the seatbelt **OR** ISOFIX attachments **AND** the top tether strap, and must have an inbuilt harness. There are now forward facing child restraints available on the Australian market with an inbuilt harness for children up to approximately 8 years of age.

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



Forward facing child restraint



Booster seat

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.

Many 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 and may or may not have a top tether strap. Refer to the restraint manufacturer's instructions.



Adult lap-sash seatbelt

Seatbelt readiness

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

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.

A child should continue using a forward facing child restraint or booster seat until they have outgrown it.

The “5 Step Test” can help determine if a child is ready to move out of a child restraint or booster seat and use an adult seatbelt.

The child should be able to:

- 1. Sit with their back against the seat back**
- 2. Bend their knees comfortably over the front of the seat cushion**
- 3. Sit with the sash belt across their mid-shoulder**
- 4. Sit with the lap belt across the top of their thighs**
- 5. Remain in this position for the whole trip.**



Choosing the safest restraint for your child

Visit the Child Restraint Evaluation Program (CREP) website at childcarseats.com.au to choose the safest restraint for your child. This program tests and 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 and NRMA.

Front and back seats

The back seat of the car is the safest place for children to travel.

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

Regulations allow children aged 7 years and over to travel in the front seat, however research shows that until children are adult sized, they are safest travelling in the back seats.

If all back 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.

Although airbags are a proven safety feature that can prevent serious injuries in the event of a crash, they are designed and tested for adult use and there is a small chance that children can be injured from the force of an 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 obtaining 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. For more information visit rch.org.au/tocan.

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 2004, 2010 and 2013 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.



ISOFIX child restraints

ISOFIX is a different way to attach a restraint to a vehicle. Both the child restraint and vehicle need to have special ISOFIX attachments.

Some cars are manufactured with ISOFIX anchorages. These allow an alternative way to attach a restraint to a vehicle which is independent of the vehicles seatbelts.

There is still potential for incorrect use of ISOFIX compatible child restraints, so it is important to take care when fitting and using child restraints, no matter the type. Incorrect use can occur when installing the restraint or when buckling children into their car seat.

What about size?

To protect your child in a crash the restraint must be the right size for your child. Shoulder height markers can help determine the suitability of a child restraint or booster seat to the child's size. Children should remain in their current child restraint or booster seat for as long as they fit within the shoulder height markers.

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.

More information

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

- VicRoads:** vicroads.vic.gov.au
Tel: 13 11 71
- RACV:** racv.com.au
Tel: (03) 9790 2190
- Kidsafe:** kidsafevic.com.au
Tel: (03) 9036 2306
- TAC:** howsafeisyourcar.com.au

