



Car Safety:

Baby Capsules & Child Restraints

(Gold Coast edition)





First and foremost child restraints are safety devices. Fashion and other marketing aspects of these devices over the years have diverted the focus from safety for many purchasers. Consumers will often buy these products based on the feel and colour of the fabric and the cushions provided; therefore comfort has unfortunately begun to override safety. Remember they are two completely different objectives.

Secondly, we have a somewhat sanitised perception of the actual risks of car travel. Sure, the chances of being involved in an accident are relatively small, but the chances of being injured are high. Add the factor that as adults we are able to ascertain the risks and take measures to protect ourselves, but our children are in our hands for their travel safety. We therefore need to make sensible purchase decisions and monitor the ongoing safe fitment and adjustment practices on a day-to-day basis for our young travellers to arrive safely.

Our perception of risk associated with car travel is often not in keeping with the reality, partly due to the fact that we have travelled in cars from a very young age and now take this mode of transport for granted. Take air travel as an example, our community shows more awareness of air travel safety and yet air travel is reportedly many times safer than car travel.

The theory of safe child restraint use is simple, but in practice it can be more challenging. Other than mastering the mechanical aspects, which is quite difficult for many, there are other variable factors. Firstly, the nature of children is that they grow and different children grow at different rates. Restraint systems are designed to protect the passenger and therefore have to be chosen and configured for the size and weight specifics of the passenger to be protected. Secondly, the vehicle that the restraint is to be used in may not allow easy fitment and or access. It may also have unique seat belts or anchorages that can be misconstrued as to how they should be used.

Every aspect of child restraint use needs to be easy to operate as the more difficulty there is the more likely an error or short cut will be taken. As an example, Comfort Pads are nice, but they often inhibit a parent from using the harness safely. Remember no slack and no twists. Additionally access is important, as is ease of use. Access in and out of the car must be considered when you are deciding on where to place the restraint. (NB: Please check with a child restraint practitioner if your vehicle has Air Bag systems when considering the placement of your child restraint systems.)



Preferred positioning is simple when there is one child, the centre rear in most family cars is the quick response; however that position is not always possible. Limitations such as anchor provision, access, physical size of the restraint and required drivers seating position all impact on the viability of this position. Consider other passenger as well whenever a fitment is being considered.

All children must be seated in a suitable restraint when travelling in a car for their own safety. Adult seatbelts do not offer sufficient protection for babies and children and an appropriate child restraint must be used until your child reaches approximate 26kg in weight (generally at about 7 years of age).

This includes your first journey home from the hospital with your baby!
Don't leave it too late to get one fitted!

****IMPORTANT INFORMATION****

All child restraints used in Australia must comply with current Australian standards - one of the main features of which is the use of a rear strap to an anchor point. Australian child restraint standards are some of the most stringent in the world and most overseas child restraints do not comply with these standards and cannot legally be used in Australia - this includes restraints from countries such as the UK and USA. It is advisable to hire or buy a child restraint in Australia from a reputable hire service rather than bringing your own from overseas.

Child restraints have been categorised into 3 different weight groups:

WEIGHT OF CHILD	APPROX. AGE OF CHILD	TYPE OF SEAT/RESTRAINT
Birth to 9kg	Birth to 6 months (approx)	Baby restraint or 'capsule'
8 - 18kg	6 months - 4 years (approx)	Child restraint
14 - 26kg	2 - 7 years (approx)	Booster seat and/or harness



A baby restraint or 'capsule' is a rear facing seat. This should be used until your child is at least 8kg in weight or 70cm in length. A child restraint is a forward facing seat with its own belt system. This should be used until your child has outgrown it; when the shoulders are too broad to fit or when the head is above the back of the restraint. A booster seat is for older children to position them correctly to use a conventional adult seatbelt. A booster seat should be used until a child's eyes are level with the top of the rear seat. They can then graduate to a normal adult position. A harness is an additional belt system that can be used with or without a booster seat instead of the standard belts fitted into the car.

It is possible to buy seats that combine two of the above categories so that you only need to obtain two different seats as your child grows. We are not aware of any seats currently available on the market that are suitable from birth right through to 26kg.

In general, the groups are combined as follows:

birth-9kg	baby capsule	convertible restraint (rear facing capsule that converts to a forward facing seat)			
8-18kg			child restraint	child restraint which converts to booster seat	
14-26kg					booster seat and/or harness



Baby capsules can be hired from a number of sources. Hire rates, including fitting, are usually extremely reasonable and generally cover the first 6 months of the baby's life. Hiring the capsule offers an economical option and allows you to allay one of the costs of a newborn baby for a few months. These hire schemes are very popular and you should book well in advance. The companies that offer this service on the Gold Coast are as follows:

ABC Nursery Hire
Gold Coast ph: 1300 724 276

Australian Breastfeeding Association
ph: (07) 3844 8977 or (07) 3844 8166

Baby Barn Discounts
14 Industry Drive, Tweed Heads South (NSW) 2486 ph: (07) 5524 5407

Baby Time Nursery Hire
5/18 Strathaird Rd, Bundall ph: (07) 5538 3888

Bassinets & More
ph: (07) 3713 7022

Burleigh Hire Shop
Burleigh Heads ph: (07) 5521 0968

Hire All Service
67 Golden Four Drive, North Kirra ph: (07) 5536 1379

Hire for Baby
ph: (07) 5535 1034

Jack & Jill Hire
Shop 3B, 3-15 Jackman St, Southport ph: (07) 5531 1563

Queensland Ambulance Service
ph: 1300 369 003

Smartway Hire
35 Thrush Ave, Paradise Point ph: (07) 5529 6304



If you are hiring a car, most car hire companies can also supply a suitable restraint for use in their vehicle. Ensure that you specify the type of restraint required at the time of booking.

Purchasing a Baby Capsule or Restraint

If you wish to purchase a capsule or restraint, you should ensure that it carries the Australian Standard AS 1754 label. Also ensure that the restraint purchased is suitable for your vehicle, particularly if you have a small car or older vehicle. If in any doubt, seek advice from your local Transport Authority or motoring organisation. Child restraints are widely available from general nursery stores. A selection of companies that you can purchase them from on the Gold Coast is as follows:



All4Mum
covering SE Queensland ph: (QLD) (07) 3700 4577

Babies Galore
Shops 1 & 2, 250 Olsen Ave, Parkwood ph: (07) 5563 3437

Baby City
Unit 12, Bundall Circle, 12 Upton St, Bundall ph: (07) 5538 9631

Baby Time Nursery Hire (sales of ex-rental stock)
5/18 Strathaird Rd, Bundall ph: (07) 5538 3888

Baby Barn Discounts
14 Industry Drv, Tweed Heads South (NSW) ph: (07) 5524 5407

Babybizz
11 Cortum Drive, Burleigh Heads ph: (07) 5576 1013

BabyCo
Shop 15-16, 107 Ferry Rd, Southport ph: (07) 5591 2061

Cupitt's Haven For Mums & Bubs
Shop 17, Coombabah Plaza, 20 Hansford Rd, Coombabah ph: (07) 5564 1899

Golliwogs Nursery Exchange (new & pre-loved)
34 Nind St, Southport ph: (07) 5532 5719

KMart
Pacific Fair, Elanora, Robina, Southport, Tweed Heads South
for exact locations, consult website

Little Stars (new & pre-loved)
Unit 9, 1 Corporation Rd, Ashmore (07) 5564 6257

Myer
Pacific Fair
for exact location, consult website

Pram City Qld
Cnr Spencer Rd & Lawrence Drv, Nerang ph: 1300 669 333

Target
Pacific Fair, Robina, Runaway Bay, Southport Park, Tweed Heads South
for exact locations, consult website or call 1300 130 000

Toys 'R' Us
Unit 1, Pacific Fair Shopping Ctr, Broadbeach ph: (07) 5572 8697 Mailorder: Freecall 1800 068 996



Getting your child restraint fitted

Most modern cars have an anchor point behind the rear seat which a child restraint can be attached to. Child restraints should always be fitted in the rear seat of the car. If you are unsure about how to fit your child restraint, or have any queries about specific fittings, or you would like to have the installation of your restraint professionally checked, contact your local motoring authority for details of approved fitters. RACQ will also check or fit seats. A small charge may be made.



Which cars best accommodate child restraints?

Consider a car with a centre lap/sash seat belt. You can also have the back seat lap-only belt replaced with a lap/sash belt in some cars. But make sure there's a centre rear anchorage point if you want to use that position for a restraint.

Ensure the anchorage points aren't too close to the seat back for the tether strap to be adjusted properly - some cars have this problem. Check your seat belts are long enough to thread through the restraint when it's in the recline position. Make sure you choose a car that will carry the number of restraints you need. Not all cars have big enough back seats to carry three restraints at once.

Here's some considerations for various types of cars.

Station wagons: Make sure you fit a cargo barrier that complies with Australian Standards.

Hatchbacks: Check there's a clear path between the back seat and the rear anchorage point so the parcel shelf doesn't interfere with adjustment of the tether strap. Luggage and some large items carried in the back often obstruct top tether straps. Some hatchbacks can also be fitted with cargo barriers or cargo nets.

MPVs: Child restraints may reduce the seating capacity in some people movers, so make sure the restraint won't interfere with your requirements. Also, people movers don't always have anchorages for each seating position. Check this first, especially if you are going to carry a number of children in restraints.

Two-door cars: It's often difficult to fit and use restraints in two-door cars. You may also hurt your back getting children in and out.

Useful links for further information:

Australian Transport Safety Bureau
http://www.atsb.gov.au/pdfs/child_restraints.pdf

Queensland Transport
http://www.roadsafety.qld.gov.au/qt/LTASinfo.nsf/index/rs_restraints_home

RACQ
<http://www.racq.com.au/>