

Carrying children safely
by car

The way to get home safely

from 1 March 2006:
are you less than 135 cm (approx. 4' 5") tall?

an appropriate child restraint is
compulsory!

www.kinderzitjes.nl

Why these new rules?

Cars are safer than ever, fitted as they are with crumple zones, safety cages and airbags to protect the occupants. Although seat belts are undoubtedly a vital chain in the link, they are specifically designed for adults. They are less effective for children and wholly unsuitable for babies and toddlers. The European Union has therefore agreed to tighten the rules governing the transport of children in cars. These rules are designed with one goal in mind: to offer children the best possible protection. As of 1 March 2006, children under 135 cm in height must be carried in an appropriate child restraint. A seat belt is mandatory for adults and children over 135 cm in height, but they are also allowed to use a booster seat. A number of exceptions have been incorporated to make the rules practically administrable. For example, child restraints are not compulsory in buses and taxis. This brochure contains all the latest information on the new rules and exceptions, the types of child restraints available, and purchase and user tips.

The Law:

The following will apply from 1 March 2006:

Children* under 135 cm (approx. 4' 5") in height:	Approved child restraint compulsory
Children* over 135 cm (approx. 4' 5") in height and adults:	Seatbelt and if required an approved child restraint (booster seat) can be used

*The term "child" denotes any person under the age of 18

The child restraint must comply with UN-ECE Regulation 44/03 or 44/04. This is specified on the inspection label or sticker (see image). To ensure safe operation, the child restraint must be fitted correctly to the vehicle. Consult the manual and the user tips at the back of this brochure.

Please note: a child restraint is compulsory for children under the age of 3, unless they are carried by taxi or bus. The below exceptions do not apply to children under the age of 3, with the exception of taxis or buses.

Special cases and exceptions

More passengers than seatbelts (temporary exception)

If there are not enough seat belts in the car for all the passengers, then children over 135 cm (approx. 4' 5") in height and adults may legally travel in the rear of the vehicle without wearing a seat belt, provided the available seatbelts are used by the other passengers. This exception shall remain in force until 1 May 2008. From 1 May 2008, all cars must be fitted with appropriate seatbelts, and no passenger may be carried without appropriate seatbelts.

Lack of space

If two child restraints are already fitted in the back of a car, lack of space often prevents the fitting of a third child restraint. In that case, children over the age of 3 must use an adult seat belt in the rear of the vehicle.

No rear seatbelts

Children under the age of 3 must not be seated in the rear of the car if no rear seatbelts are fitted, as the child restraint is secured to the seatbelts. In that case, children over the age of 3 and adults may travel unrestricted in the rear seats of the vehicle.

No front or rear seatbelts

If your car is not equipped with front seatbelts, it is illegal to carry any child under 3 years of age. Children aged 3 years and over and under 135 cm in height must not travel in the front seats of the vehicle if no seatbelts are fitted in the vehicle.

Carrying 'other people's children'

Parents and foster parents are required to fit a child restraint for their own child(ren). It may occasionally be necessary to transport other children, for example to an away match of the youth football team. A child restraint may not be available for all children. For occasional journeys over short distances (excluding holidays), an adult seat belt in the rear of the vehicle may be used by children (but not your own children) aged 3 and over. If you are making these trips on a regular basis, it is recommended to fit extra child restraints for added safety and security.

Taxis and buses / coaches

The fitting of child restraints is not compulsory for buses and on the rear seat of taxis. Children over the age of 3 and adults must use seatbelts, if available, and children under the age of 3 may travel unrestricted. If at all possible, do not hold a child on your lap as this presents particular risks in a frontal collision.

Other news

Airbag

A rear-facing baby seat should never be placed in the front if the car is fitted with a passenger airbag. The baby seat can only be fitted if the airbag is switched off or disconnected. Consult your owner's manual to assess how to switch off or disconnect your airbag and indeed whether deactivation is possible. Alternatively, contact your local garage.

Appropriate use of seatbelts and child restraints.

Seatbelts and child restraints must be used correctly and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. This is how they were tested. For example, it is no longer permitted to place the diagonal strap under the arm or behind the back. Seatbelts are not designed for this type of use and will not work properly. The best way to protect an unborn child is to protect the mother by encouraging the proper use of seatbelts. The hip belt should be placed below the abdomen, and the diagonal strap across the chest, above the abdomen.

Belt guide

Belt guides (a belt clip) ensure that the shoulder belt runs across the shoulder and not against the neck. A seatbelt guide can be part of a booster seat. It is also possible to purchase seatbelt guides separately. These are not suitable for small children, and are only suitable for:

adults

children weighing more than 36 kg (see 'child restraints for groups')

the abovementioned exceptions where the use of a child restraint is not required

In these cases, the permitted seatbelt guides must satisfy a number of conditions. They may only be fitted to the diagonal part of the seatbelt. Seatbelt guides that connect the hip strap to the diagonal strap are therefore illegal. Seatbelt guides may not prohibit the proper operation of the seatbelt and must be smooth to prevent any damage to the seatbelt.

A booster seat is a much safer alternative for children, as it ensures that the hip part of the belt runs across the pelvis and not across the abdomen. This reduces the risk of serious internal injury in the event of an accident. Seat belt guides do not eliminate the risk of injury. A booster seat is therefore a much safer option than a seat belt guide.

Which child restraint for which child?

Is your child under or over 135 cm (approx. 4' 5") in height?

Under 135 cm in height:

How much does your child weigh?

Under 13 kg (28 lbs / 2 stone):

Baby seats (group 0 and 0+)

Over 135 cm in height:

The use of a seatbelt
(if available) is compulsory.

If the belt runs across the child's neck
rather than the shoulder, use
a booster seat.

Between 9 and 18 kg:

Child seat (group 1)

Between 15 and 26 kg:

Booster seat (groups 2 and 3)

Over 36 kg (approx. 6 stone):

Seatbelt, with

booster seat or separate

seatbelt guide (belt clip /

belt clamp)

Group child seats

Group 0 and 0+: Baby seats

Baby seats are rear-facing. The seat is secured to the three-point belt. The child is secured with a Y-shaped belt. A number of baby seats can also be fitted with a so-called ISOFIX system: these seats have two rear mountings. Cars specifically designed for this system have two 'anchorage points' between the backrest and the seat. To secure the baby seat, simply click the rear mountings into the 'anchorage points' Some seats are fitted with a third anchorage point. For more information, please consult the instruction manual included with the baby seat.

Group 1: Child seat

Child seats are designed for children who are able to travel unaccompanied. The child is fitted to the five-point belt of the seat. The majority of child seats are forward-facing and adjustable. The child seat is secured with the seatbelt or with the ISOFIX system.

Groups 2 and 3: Booster seat

The child is seated on the booster seat and is secured with the seatbelt. The booster seat ensures that the diagonal part of the seatbelt runs across the child's shoulder rather than the neck. In addition, the hip belt of the booster seat runs across the pelvis and not the abdomen to prevent serious internal injury. Booster seats are equipped with or without a backrest. We would recommend a booster seat with (detachable) backrest. Most backrests are adjustable in height, providing better sideward support if the child falls asleep during the car journey. The backrest additionally provides some protection in the event of side impact collisions. The backrest moves the child slightly forward, enabling him / her to bend the knees. This is a more comfortable seating position and prevents slumping. If the child is slumped in the seat, the hip belt is no longer in place, increasing the risk of serious internal injury in the event of a collision.

Children weighing more than 36 kg

There are no approved child seats for children weighing more than 36 kg. An appropriate seatbelt must be used in this case. If the seatbelt runs across the child's neck rather than the shoulder, it is recommended to transport them in a booster seat until they are tall enough to use the seatbelt. Alternatively, use a separate belt guide (clip / clamp, see also 'The Law').

This option should only be used as a last resort!

Tips for safe use

Safely secured

Always ensure the child seat is safely and properly secured. The more securely the seat is fitted, the better the protection afforded.

Rear-facing seats

Children should be carried in rear-facing seat as long as possible, at least until their 1st birthday.

Airbag

It is illegal to fit a rearward-facing baby seat in the front passenger seat if an airbag is fitted. To fit the baby seat, it is necessary to switch off or disconnect the airbag. If the airbag went off it would strike the seat backwards with considerable force, causing serious or even fatal injuries. It is recommended that children up to the age of 12 are not seated against an activated airbag. If there is no alternative, ensure that the passenger seat is positioned as far back from the airbag as possible.

Tightening seatbelts

Always tighten the belts of the child restraint securely. Exercise extra caution when fitting a booster seat: as these are not fitted with belts, the child must be secured with the seatbelt.

Booster seat

If the seatbelt runs across the neck of your child rather than the shoulder, use a booster seat. Do this even if your child is taller than 135 cm.

Adjusting the belts

Regularly check that the belts of the child restraint are properly adjusted. Adjust the belts for example if your child is wearing extra layers of clothes.

Avoid belt guides

The proper operation of the seatbelt should not be obstructed. Belt guides (clips / clamps) must therefore be avoided, with the exception of some special cases or exceptions (see The Law). It is no longer permitted to place the diagonal strap under the arm or behind the back.

Avoid holding children on your lap

Do not hold your children on your lap, irrespective of whether you are seated in the front or rear of the car, or whether you are wearing a seat belt. This is highly dangerous in the event of a frontal collision.

Provide sufficient head support

Make sure your child's head is properly supported. The back of the child's head must not touch the edge of the backrest of the seat or protrude above it. If this is the case, it is time to move up a level.

After a collision

If you have suffered a collision, replace the child seat, even if the exterior of the seat has not sustained any damage. In other words, replace the child seat even if you have only collided with a bollard!

Baby buggies

Although some baby buggies comply with ECE Regulation 44/03 or 44/04, it is much safer to transport a baby in an approved baby seat. The construction of these seats and the way they are transported provide much better protection for the baby. An ordinary travel cot should never be used in a car, as it offers little or no protection.

Boot or load space

It is forbidden to carry passengers in the boot or load space of the car or in a trailer or caravan.

Campervan

Although it is not safe to carry people in the living area of a campervan without seatbelts, it is permitted by law in certain instances, depending for example on the year of manufacture of the campervan. For further information, please visit www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl.

More information?

For the latest information, games and photo competitions for you and your children, please visit www.kinderzitjes.nl. You can also print out your very own Goochem tape measure. Lots of fun for the children, lots of information for the parents.

For more information on how to carry your children safely, please visit www.veiligheid.nl.

Publishing information

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The way to get home safely

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Carrying children safely
in a child restraint

Always go for safety, not the exception

The statutory obligation to fit child restraints is not designed to complicate the lives of motorists, but to protect the child's right to be carried in safety.

Exceptions are designed to indemnify drivers against any instances where they cannot reasonably be expected to have an approved child restraint in place when carrying children at a particular moment in time.

Please remember that the exceptions effectively compromise the safety of children.

Parents and others carrying children are therefore advised not to operate on the borderline of the exceptions, but wherever possible to choose the safest transport option.

My car has no seatbelts. Can I fit seatbelts in combination with a child restraint?

If no seatbelts are fitted, these may be fitted subsequently, provided they are fitted expertly, for example by an approved vehicle body repair shop.

How should I interpret the term 'occasional journey'?

This notion is open to interpretation; however, if the child is transported on a daily or weekly basis, this constitutes more than an occasional journey. Exceptions are designed to indemnify drivers against any instances where they cannot reasonably be expected to have an approved child restraint in place when carrying children at a particular moment in time. Motorists are however expected to fit a suitable child restraint if they are making regular journeys.

My father collects my children from school once a week, is he required to have child restraints fitted?

As this is a recurring event, it cannot be classed as an occasional journey. A child restraint must therefore be used. If the same child is transported on a daily or weekly basis, the journey cannot be classed as an occasional journey.

What are the rules governing the use of buses or private vehicles to transport my child to after-school centres? Should child restraints be fitted?

If the buses used are classed as passenger vehicles (= intended to transport no more than 8 people, excluding the driver) rather than taxis (blue number plates), the use of child restraints is compulsory. Some schools use their own buses, with either volunteer drivers or hired drivers. If the buses used are classed as private passenger vehicles (= intended to transport no more than 8 people, excluding the driver) rather than taxis (blue number plates), the use of child restraints is compulsory.

If I want to transport other children, am I really obliged to place my own children in a child restraint and use a seatbelt for other children? It seems a little odd to offer the safest seats to my own children.

This may indeed seem rather anti-social. This 'exception to the exception' is designed to stop motorists who (only) transport their own children without a child restraint justifying their actions by claiming they only ever travel short distances. The parents of other children are more than welcome to provide a child restraint for their own children.

How should I interpret the term 'short distance'?

This term 'short distance' denotes a maximum distance of 50 kilometres (approx. 30 miles).

My car is equipped with a third seat, is this suitable for children?

The same rules apply to the third seat as the second seat.

I'm going on holiday, do the same rules apply in other European countries?

The modified regulations governing the carrying of children apply to all EU member states. There may however be slight differences and discrepancies.

In some countries, a child restraint is compulsory for children under 150 cm (not 135 cm). Some exceptions do not apply in certain countries.