

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CAR SEAT

Every year around 25 children between the ages of 0 and 11 years are killed while travelling in cars, about 250 are seriously injured and around 6,000 slightly injured. The proper use of child car restraints would prevent many of these deaths and injuries.

The car seat law requiring children to use an appropriate car seat until they are 135cm tall has been in force now for three years (see www.childcarseats.org.uk for the current legislation). However choosing the right car seat is still a very confusing task and with so many different car seats on the market it can be difficult to know where to start. Here are a few things to look for when considering a car seat:

- Not every car seat fits every car - if in any doubt seek professional advice from a trained retailer.
- If you are using a car seat in more than one car make sure that it fits each car.
- Different car seats are suitable for children of different weights and ages. The table below gives a brief guide:

Weight / Age of Child	Type of Seat
Up to 13kgs (approx 9 – 12 months)	Rear facing seat or infant carrier (Group 0+) (Only in the front passenger seat if the air bag has been deactivated)
9kg to 18kg (9 months to 4 years)	Forward facing car seat (Group 1)
15kgs and over (approx 4 years and over)	Booster seat (Group 2 3)
From 22kgs (approx 6 years and over)	Booster cushion* (Group 3)
* Remember booster cushions do not offer any protection in the event of a side impact collision and can slip out from underneath smaller children. Booster seats also offer a nice comfy headrest if your child falls asleep in the car – some even have built in speakers so your child can listen to their own choice of music or plug in their in-car DVD.	

- Be very wary about buying a car seat by mail order unless you know it will definitely fit your car.
- Never buy a second hand car seat unless you are 100% sure of its history and that it has never been involved in an accident. In addition, older car seats may not comply with current safety legislation and their components can perish and deteriorate after languishing in the loft.
- If your car is involved in an accident you should change your car seat – many insurers now make provisions for this.
- Don't rush to put your child in a forward facing seat - your child needs to develop their neck muscles so they can cope in the event of a collision. Ideally your child should have been sitting confidently unaided for about 3 months. In Sweden children stay in a rear facing car seat until they are 4 years old!

Amesbury Baby Centre can give you advice on the right car seat for your child, your car and your budget and offer a Britax certified car seat fitting service. They stock a range of car seats from Britax, Nania, Recaro and the Which? acclaimed Kiddy Infinity Pro and Comfort Pro.

Further information can be found at www.rospa.com; www.childcarseats.org.uk, or www.think.dft.gov.uk



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