

Seat Belts Are Not Toys!

Teach Children Not to Play with Seat Belts

Child
Safety
Facts
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Can seat belts be dangerous?

Seat belts are lifesavers. They are important for installing car seats as well as for children riding in boosters or big enough to use a only a seat belt. However, seat belts can cause injury if children play with them.

In some cases, children have been injured or even killed when they wrapped a shoulder belt around their body or neck. This can cause choking or strangulation. This has happened to kids of all ages. Neither they nor their parents knew the seat belt could be dangerous.

Children do all sorts of unexpected things. A child might play by wrapping himself up in the belt or making the belt into a leash to pretend to be a dog. Without meaning to, he could make the belt tight and be unable to loosen it.



Know about your car's belts

Any strap wrapped around the neck could be dangerous, but some lap-shoulder belts are more likely to cause problems than others.

- Learn if your car's lap-shoulder belts are made so that the belt locks after you've pulled the belt webbing all the way out. (This type of belt is helpful for attaching car seats.) Once locked, it will only get tighter. To loosen the belt, it must be unbuckled so it can roll in all the way. If it is around a child's



body, this may not be possible.

See your car manual to learn about seat belts and car seat installation. Some belts have labels to help (left).

- In newer cars, a car seat may be installed using either a seat

belt or the LATCH system (see the car's manual). If a car seat is installed using LATCH, the seat belt is not used and might be within reach of children.

- A child in a booster seat can easily reach the seat belt. Teach her not to play with the belt. Consider using a car seat with a harness that has a higher upper weight limit. (Find a list of car seats at www.healthychildren.org.)

Resources

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

"Keeping Kids Safe: Inside & Out"; www.safercar.gov

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A: 800-745-7233, 800-747-7266 (Spanish); www.carseat.org

KidsAndCars.org: www.kidsandcars.org

Belt Cutter: Search "seat belt cutters" on the Web for many product options.

Find a local Child Passenger Safety Inspection Location:

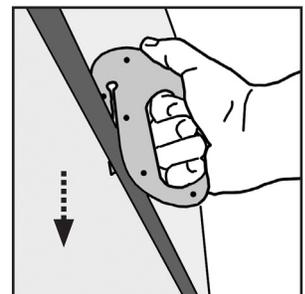
866-732-8243 or www.seatcheck.org.

Steps to reduce the danger

- Never leave a child alone in a car, even for a short time.
- Do not let children play in the car when it is parked.
- Teach your child never to play with seat belts.
- Be aware of what children are doing in the back seat.
- Provide things like soft toys, music, books, or a story on tape or CD to keep children busy during car rides.
- Keep a car seat harness snug. A child in a snug harness will be less able to reach an unused seat belt.
- If using LATCH, consider what to do with the unused seat belt. Check the car seat and car manuals for ideas. Some say to buckle the seat belt behind the car seat or loosely through the car seat belt path.
- If a child can reach an unused seat belt that could lock if pulled out, buckle the belt and lock it yourself. This will keep the belt from lengthening if grabbed.

If a child is caught in a seat belt

- Pull over. Pull the belt away from the retractor so it won't get shorter. Tell the child to be very still.
- Call 911 and/or keep a seat belt cutter in your car so you can cut the belt (see Resources).



A belt cutter can be used in emergencies. Cut at an angle.

