

# Auto Safety For Children

## **Children In Cars With Passenger Air Bags**

While air bags are saving lives on our highways and are preventing many serious injuries, they have also been responsible for causing some injuries and even deaths. Infants in rear-facing restraints and unbelted or improperly belted children in the front seat of vehicles with passenger bags are among those at risk of serious air bag inflation injuries. Because children are lighter than adults, their risk is greater, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The following information is offered to parents and other adults who travel with children:

- Proper restraint use comes first. Riding unrestrained or improperly restrained always has been the greatest hazard for children.
- The safest place in a car is in the back seat. This was true before air bags. Now it's doubly true. Properly belted infants and children in the back seat cannot be in the paths of inflating bags.
- Find out whether your vehicle, especially if it's a recent model, has a passenger air bag (check the visors). If it does, don't use a rear-facing restraint in front. The only exception is if there is no back seat and there is a switch to deactivate the passenger bag.
- What's good for kids is good for adults, too, so buckle your own lap/shoulder belt. Restraints keep people in the occupant compartment in crashes and ensure they don't slam into interior surfaces. Another reason to use your belt is to set a good example for children.
- Air bags plus belts are the best protection for most people.

## **Myths and Facts About Child Safety Seats**

**MYTH:** Child safety seats aren't important on short, low-speed trips around town.

**FACT:** In an accident, a 10-pound child riding in a car traveling 30 mph is thrown forward at a force of 300 pounds. It's equivalent to dropping a child from a third-story window.

**MYTH:** Small children are less likely to be injured because they are light and resilient.

**FACT:** Seventy-seven percent of all injuries to children in car accidents are head injuries. Safety seats help to absorb the force of a crash and help prevent injuries.

**MYTH:** Any normal baby carrier can provide makeshift protection.

**FACT:** Plastic infant seats or carriers cannot withstand the force of a crash. Child safety seats manufactured after January 1, 1981, are designed to meet current federal standards and provide the best protection for a child.

Keep you and your family safe. Buckle up, and always use approved child safety seats for your small children whenever you are in your car.