

If you're transporting tamariki (children) in a vehicle on our roads, you need to know how to safely restrain them so they're protected in a crash.

Find out more by watching our video content online at [www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-videos](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-videos)

## It's the driver's responsibility

As the driver, you must make sure any child travelling in your vehicle is correctly using an approved child restraint.

You need to use the right type of child restraint, make sure it's correctly installed into the vehicle, and make sure the child is correctly secured into the child restraint.

## What is an approved child restraint?

Approved child restraints include:

- infant restraints for young babies (often called baby capsules)
- restraints for older babies, toddlers and preschool tamariki (often called car seats)
- booster seats for preschool and school-aged tamariki (full boosters are safest)
- child safety harnesses (used with or without a booster seat) for preschool and school-aged tamariki.

All approved child restraints display standard markings (explained later in this factsheet).

## Child restraint technicians can help you

Child restraint technicians can give you advice on the type of child restraint you may need.

They also have the practical knowledge to correctly fit your child restraint into a vehicle, and show you how to do it too.

Child restraint technicians come from a variety of organisations like retailers, health care providers and charities.

Find a child restraint technician online at [www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians)

## Where to get a child restraint

You can buy child restraints in shops that specialise in baby supplies, as well as department stores and larger toy shops.

You can rent child restraints from local community groups, health care providers and some retailers.

The cost of renting child restraints can vary. Sometimes Te Hiranga Tangata Work and Income New Zealand can help with the cost.

You can get more information about renting, buying and installing child restraints from car seat retailers, child restraint retailers, Whānau Āwhina Plunket and other hire outlets.

## Test the child restraint

We strongly recommended you try the restraint you're thinking about buying or hiring in your vehicle, and with your child in the restraint.

Some restraints fit the shape of some vehicle seats and seatbelts better than others.

## Requirements for using child restraints

These are the legal requirements.

### Children under 2 years old

You should keep your baby in a rear-facing child restraint in the back seat until at least 2 years old, depending on their height and weight. Check your child restraint instruction manual for its height and weight information.

### Children under 7 years old

If the child is under 7 years old you must use an approved child restraint, appropriate for their age and size.

They must not travel in the vehicle if you can't put them in an approved child restraint.

The vehicle's seatbelt on its own isn't an approved child restraint.

### Children 7 years old

If the child is 7 years old you must use an approved child restraint appropriate for their age and size. If there isn't one available in the vehicle, you're required to use a seatbelt. However, if your child is under 148cm tall, the safe option is to use an approved child restraint.

### Children 8 to 14 years old

Children 8 to 14 years old must use a seatbelt and sit in the back seat if one is available.

### Children over 14 years old

Children over 14 years old must use a seatbelt.

### Sit children in the back seat

A child under 15 years old should sit in the back seat, unless those seats are occupied by children under 15, or the vehicle doesn't have any back seats. Sitting in the back seat helps protect young bodies against crash forces.

### Exceptions to these requirements

[www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-exceptions](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-exceptions)

## Advice on keeping tamariki safe while travelling

### International best practice

International best practice recommends you use an appropriate child restraint or booster seat until your child is 148cm tall (this is usually when they're around 11 or 12 years old).

Child restraint and medical professionals recommend you keep your baby in a rear-facing restraint until as old as practicable, and at least until they're 2 years old. Rear-facing restraints increase your baby's safety.

## Front seat or back seat?

We recommend you use the appropriate child restraint or seatbelt in the back seat wherever possible – it's safer.

## Look for standard markings on child restraints

A child restraint must meet an approved standard. That means the design and construction of the child restraint is laboratory-tested under crash conditions. It gives the best protection in a crash when you use it following the manufacturer's instructions.

All approved child restraints display one of the standard markings below, to show they're approved.

### New Zealand and Australian Standard

A tick mark shows the restraint meets the joint New Zealand and Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754.



### European Standard

An E mark shows the restraint meets the European Standard ECE 44 or ECE 129. The number in the circle depends on the country of certification.



### United States Standard

A standard mark showing the restraint meets the United States Standard FMVSS 213 must also show the New Zealand Standard mark S, to show it's certified for use in New Zealand.



## Installing a child restraint

When you install a child restraint, always follow the child restraint manufacturer's instructions and the vehicle instruction manual. This will help you make sure you install the child restraint safely.

### Place the child restraint in the back seat

It's always safer to put your child restraint in the back seat. This is true regardless of the child's age, size or type of child restraint you're using.

### Protect rear-facing children from airbags

Never put a child in a **rear-facing** child restraint in the front seat of a car that has a passenger airbag. If the airbag activates, it could seriously injure or kill the child.

## Seatbelt requirements

Different types of child restraints require different types of seatbelt to hold them securely.

Most child restraints require a three-point seatbelt and tether strap (although some may not need the tether strap).

Some child restraints for babies and younger tamariki can be secured using a lap belt in the back middle seat.

Others can be secured with fixtures in the vehicle, like ISOFIX and LATCH systems.

**Find out more by watching our video content online.**

[www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-videos](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-videos)

## If you don't have seats or seatbelts in the back of your vehicle

If you don't have seats or seatbelts in the back of your vehicle, ask a child restraint technician or your local garage for advice about getting them installed, before you transport tamariki.

Remember, it's always safer to seat tamariki in the back, and you can't transport a child under 7 years old if you don't have a child restraint available and appropriately fitted.

## If you have to put the child restraint in the front seat

Remember, never put a child in a rear-facing child restraint in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger airbag.

If you must use a forward-facing child restraint in the front passenger seat (eg because there aren't any back seats), please read the manufacturer's instructions for both the vehicle and the restraint.

The instructions will tell you whether your child restraint can be correctly fitted in the front seat of that vehicle (eg it has the required anchor point for the tether strap).

If the vehicle manufacturer's instructions say you can safely install a child restraint in the front passenger seat, we recommend you move the seat back as far as it can go.

You may need to add a seatbelt clip to make the child restraint fit correctly.

When using a booster seat, check the diagonal part of the seatbelt (the sash) is away from the child's neck and crosses the child's shoulder and chest bone. You may need to adjust the vehicle seat until it fits correctly.

**Ask a child restraint technician for advice.** Find one at [www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians)

## Tether straps and anchor points

Most child restraints used in Aotearoa New Zealand have upper tether straps. This means they still use the vehicle's seatbelts, and also have a strap that must be clipped onto an anchor point in the vehicle.

Check the vehicle manufacturer's manual to find the tether anchor point locations in your vehicle.

If you can't find an anchor point in your vehicle, you have two options:

1. Install an anchor point\*.
2. Find and use a model of child restraint that's designed to work without an upper tether strap.

\*You can buy an anchor point from most places that sell child restraints and baby supplies. A competent vehicle mechanic or main dealer for your vehicle's make should be able to install the anchor point for you, so it's safely secured into the correct place on your vehicle.

## Only switch to seatbelts if they fit

Seatbelts are designed for adult bodies. You should use an approved child restraint until the child is tall enough for an adult seatbelt to fit them correctly.

This is generally accepted as when the child is taller than 148cm and when:

- the child is able to sit upright against the back of the seat with their knees comfortably bent over the edge of the seat cushion
- the diagonal part of the seatbelt crosses the child's shoulder and breastbone, not their neck
- the lap part of the seatbelt crosses low down on the child's lap, touching their thighs, and isn't up around their stomach.

#### Important seatbelt notes

- Seatbelts are designed to hold **one** person.
- Never put a seatbelt around two or more children.
- Never put a child on an adult's lap with the seatbelt around them both.

### Take your baby out of the child restraint when not travelling

Always use a child restraint to transport babies, but take them out of the restraint when you've finished driving. Don't let them sleep in the restraint when you're not travelling.

It's also recommended that you stop driving every 30 minutes, have a break, and take the baby out of the restraint.

Limiting the amount of time your baby sleeps in a child restraint helps reduce the risk of sudden unexpected death in infancy.

For more information see [www.nzta.govt.nz/baby-sleep](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/baby-sleep)

### Second-hand child restraints checklist

Before you buy a second-hand child restraint, always do these checks.

- Ask a child restraint technician to check the restraint.**  
This is the safest option. Find a child restraint technician at [www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraint-technicians)
- Check the restraint for its manufacture and/or expiry date.**  
Don't use a child restraint in Aotearoa if its expiry date has passed. If you can't find an expiry or 'do not use after' date on the restraint, and it's more than 10 years old, you shouldn't buy or use it.
- Check the restraint for its standard mark.**  
Don't use a child restraint in Aotearoa if it doesn't display one of the approved standard marks.
- Ask for the user manual that goes with the restraint.**  
If a manual isn't offered with the restraint, check online or contact the manufacturer for information about the model before you buy it.
- Make sure all parts of the restraint are in good order.**
  - » If they're damaged or worn out, they won't be safe, and won't protect your tamariki in a crash as well as they should.
  - » Confirm the restraint has never been in a vehicle crash of any type. If it has been in a crash of any type, discard it.
  - » Remove all covers and padding to check the frame is free of any marks or discoloured plastic that might show the frame has been under stress or might be weakened.
  - » Check all straps and buckles to make sure they work correctly.
- Check the restraint will be suitable for your child and will fit into your vehicle.**

### In-built child restraints

Some imported Japanese vehicles have in-built child restraints in the back seats.

If you have one of these child restraints in your vehicle and the vehicle was entry-certified after 27 February 2005, the child restraint will have been checked and will be safe to use.

If the vehicle was first registered in Aotearoa before 27 February 2005, you should get a child restraint technician to check the restraint, to make sure it's safe.

#### What to look out for when you buy a vehicle

If you're buying a vehicle, look for one with the highest safety rating in your price range. Buy one with enough seats, anchor points and three-point lap-shoulder seatbelts for your whole family.

Avoid vehicles with lap belts if possible.

For more information, and to check current safety and environmental ratings, go to [www.rightcar.govt.nz](http://www.rightcar.govt.nz)

### Where to find out more

#### Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency

We have more information online about the topics in this factsheet as well as other topics, including:

- video guidelines on installing child restraints
- other child restraint publications
- safety or product recalls
- bringing a child restraint into Aotearoa
- taking a child restraint to another country
- frequently asked questions.

[www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraints](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/child-restraints)  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/seatbelts](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/seatbelts)

#### Whānau Āwhina Plunket

Plunket is a national not-for-profit organisation. It's a community-owned and governed support service for the development, health and wellbeing of tamariki under 5 years old.

Contact PlunketLine on 0800 933 922 or visit their website at [www.plunket.org.nz](http://www.plunket.org.nz)

#### Safekids Aotearoa

Safekids Aotearoa is the national injury prevention service of Starship Children's Health. They work to raise public awareness of child injury issues and advocate for the adoption of policies and strategies that will improve child safety.

[www.safekids.org.nz](http://www.safekids.org.nz)



This factsheet includes legal requirements and safety advice supporting Road to Zero - New Zealand's road safety strategy to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads.


Find out more:  
[www.nzta.govt.nz/road-to-zero](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/road-to-zero)





This factsheet is a general guide only. It doesn't replace legal advice, and your exact requirements will depend on current legislation.

Make sure you have the most up-to-date version of this factsheet by checking [www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/factsheets)

 [www.nzta.govt.nz](http://www.nzta.govt.nz)

 0800 822 422

 [info@nzta.govt.nz](mailto:info@nzta.govt.nz)

 Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency,  
Private Bag 11777, Palmerston North 4442