



FROM 27th FEBRUARY 2007  
YOU MUST USE THE CORRECT  
CAR SEAT FOR YOUR CHILD.

**NO SEATBELT NO EXCUSE**



## What is the new law?

Children under 3 years **MUST** use the child restraint appropriate for their weight in any vehicle (including vans and other goods vehicles). There is only one exception:-

- a child under three may travel unrestrained in the rear of a taxi if the correct child restraint is not available.

Rear-facing baby seats **MUST NOT** be used in a seat protected by a front air-bag unless the air-bag has been deactivated manually or automatically.

In vehicles where seat belts are fitted, children from 3 years and up to 135 cms in height (approx 4ft 5ins) **MUST** use the appropriate child restraint.

Three exceptions allow these children to travel in the rear and use an adult belt :-

- in a taxi, if the correct child restraint is not available;
- for a short distance in an unexpected necessity, if the correct child restraint is not available;
- where two occupied child seats in the rear prevent the fitting of a third child seat.



## When will this new law apply?

From 27th February 2007.

Further regulations will come into force:



- from May 2008, all child restraints must comply with the **UN ECE 44.03** standard (or subsequent versions). Child restraints to the 44.03 standard have been on sale for many years.

### Seat belt/child restraint wearing requirements from 27th February 2007

	Front Seat	Rear Seat	Who is Responsible?
Driver	Seat belt must be worn if fitted		Driver
Child under 3 years of age	Correct child restraint must be used	Correct child restraint must be used. If one is not available in a taxi, may travel unrestrained	Driver
Child from 3rd birthday up to 135 cms in height (or 12th birthday whichever they reach first)	Correct child restraint must be used	Correct child restraint must be used where seat belts fitted. Must use adult belt in a rear seat if correct child restraint not available - - in a taxi; - for a short distance in an unexpected necessity; - if two occupied child restraints prevent fitting a third.	Driver
Child 12 or 13, or over 135 cms in height	Seat belt (or child restraint) must be worn if fitted	Seat belt (or child restraint) must be worn if fitted	Driver
All passengers 14 and over	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Seat belt must be worn if fitted	Passenger

## What are "child restraints"?

"Child restraints" is the collective term for:

	Seat Facing	Weight and Age	Typical Examples
Baby seats	rear-facing	for children up to 13 kgs (approx age birth to 9-12 months)	
Child seats	forward facing	for children 9 kgs to 18 kgs (approx 9 months to 4 years)	
Booster seats		for children 15 kgs and up (from approx 4 years)	
Booster cushions		for children from 22 kgs (from approx 6 years)	

## What are the penalties for not using a child restraint?

A £30 fixed penalty notice. If a case goes to court, the maximum fine is £500.

## So I can't carry children in just a seat belt until they are over 135cm?

True - the new law requires this for children's safety.

There are a few exemptions but parents and carers will need to think ahead about how they, or someone else, will be carrying their child.

## Why aren't adult seat belts OK for older children?

- Adult seat belts are best for people with an adult bone structure. Children need to use child seats and boosters to be safe - they put them in the right position to use the seat belt properly.
- The lap belt of an adult seat belt needs to go as low as possible over the stomach. A child needs to be boosted up so the adult belt fits properly. If not, the adult belt sits too high over the stomach and in a crash there is a risk of damage to internal organs as well as sliding under the belt.



## What about travelling in taxis?

Taxis cannot be expected to have the right child seat or booster unless parents have brought one with them.

If child seats or boosters are not available in a taxi:

- under 3s may travel unrestrained in the rear seat only;
- those 3 years and above must use an adult belt in the rear seat only.

**A child under 135 cms in a front seat of any vehicle must use the correct child seat or booster.**

## What if someone has to give a child a lift at short notice and does not have the correct child restraint?

If there is an "unexpected necessity" there is an exemption for a child of 3 years or more to wear an adult belt on a short journey in a car or light goods vehicle when no appropriate child seat is available. The exemption is not intended to cover regular school runs or other journeys.

**Children under 3 years must always have a child seat. The only exception is travel in the rear of taxis when a child seat is not available.**

## We have 4 children but only a medium size car. Do they all need to use child seats and boosters?

If they are under 135 cms then they all need to use the correct seat or booster for their size.

## What if I can't fit 3 child seats in the back of my car?

If a car has 3 seat belts in the rear, and 2 occupied child seats or boosters prevent the fitting of a third, a third child 3 years or over may then use an adult belt. If there is room it would be safer for the third child to travel in the front seat and use the correct child seat or booster.

## Do the new rules apply in vans and larger commercial vehicles?

The new rules apply in cars, vans and goods vehicles.

## Why can't I use a rear-facing baby seat in a seat protected by an active front air-bag?

Air-bags are powerful safety devices. A rear-facing baby seat would be hit by a front air-bag if it deployed - and could be thrown up and towards the rear of the vehicle. This means that the baby seat and child could be completely unrestrained during a crash.



A child in a rear-facing baby seat could be badly hurt by a front air-bag if it deployed

### Can I use a forward facing child seat or booster in a seat fitted with an active air-bag?

Check what the car handbook says about children in seats with front air-bags. We strongly recommend that advice should be followed because air-bags are powerful safety devices that must be treated with respect. Children, and adults for that matter, should not sit close to an active front air-bag. We suggest that the front passenger seat should be as far back as possible from an air-bag.

### I'll need to get a child seat/booster seat or cushion now. How do I choose the right one and how much will that cost?

- There is a range of products and prices. All the major shops selling child seats have information on their websites, including prices.
- The right seat for your child depends upon the child's weight. If you need help, most retailers of child restraints will have trained staff that can help in choosing the right one.
- Most seats will fit most cars but our advice is to try before you buy.

## How do I know if my child car seat is correctly fitted?

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully when fitting your child car seat and keep them in your car. Make sure that the child seats are tightly held in place. Make sure others know how to fit them properly if they are taking your children out with them.
- Some retailers offer demonstrations on how to fit a child seat. Check your child seat is still fitted correctly before every trip.
- Speak with your local D.O.E. Road Safety Education Officer or look out in your local press for any fitting checks in your area.

## When I buy a new child car seat, how will I know if it will fit my car properly?

Try before you buy. Some retailers offer demonstrations on how to fit a child seat and advise on what seat fits best. Manufacturers' web-sites may also provide advice.

Baby Seat



### **Can second-hand child seats and boosters be used?**

Parents/carers should beware of second-hand child seats. They need to check whether they display the up-to-date UN ECE 44.03 or later standard. Do they have the correct fitting instructions, and have they been in a crash? It is a good idea to replace any child seat that has been involved in a crash.

### **My child is under 135 cms in height but already weighs more than 36 kgs? Should he use the adult belt?**

No. The legislation is clear that height is the measure to decide whether to move up to the adult belt. Using a booster cushion and the adult belt even if a child is over 36 kgs is much better than using the adult belt alone.

### **Never carry a baby or child on your lap**

Never carry a baby or child on your lap and do not allow any of your passengers to do so. Babies and children must travel in a child restraint. An unrestrained child will be in serious danger if the vehicle stops suddenly or is in a crash.

### **Never use a seat belt for more than one person (adult or child)**

Never use a seat belt for more than one person. Do not travel with a baby or child on your lap sharing the belt. You and the child are likely to be badly hurt if the car stops suddenly or is in a crash.

An active front airbag is an added danger if you are sitting with a baby or child on your lap in the front passenger seat.

## What about large buses and coaches?

All passengers aged 14 years and above must use seat belts where fitted. Operators must inform all passengers of the need to use seat belts.

Passengers are exempt from the requirement to use seat belts in large buses or coaches being used as a local service where the entire route consists of restricted roads (roads where street lighting is not more than 185m apart) or where provision has been made for standing passengers and the operator permits standing.

## Exemptions from seat belt wearing

There is a specific exemption from seat belt wearing on medical grounds. There are some other exemptions, for example when reversing.

If you think you should not wear a seat belt on medical grounds, please consult your doctor. He/she will decide and, if warranted, will issue you with a formal "Certificate of Exemption from Compulsory Seat Belt Wearing". This must be produced if the police ask you for it. For more information see

**[www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk](http://www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk)**

If you are claiming certain benefits you may be entitled to assistance towards the cost of any medical examination for a medical exemption certificate.

For more information on the law on seat belt and child restraint wearing, please contact:

**Road Safety Branch  
Department of the Environment  
Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide St  
Belfast BT2 8GB  
Tel: 02890 540049  
Fax: 02890 540681  
Email: [roadsafety.clarencecourt@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafety.clarencecourt@doeni.gov.uk)**

For further information about the fitting and wearing of seat belts and child restraints, and road safety in general, please contact your local DOE Road Safety Education Office:

Road Safety  
1 Markethill Road  
**ARMAGH**  
BT60 1NR  
028 37 520773

Road Safety  
40 Academy Street  
**BELFAST**  
BT1 2NQ  
028 90 508181

Road Safety  
County Hall  
182 Galgorm Road  
**BALLYMENA**  
BT42 1HN  
028 25 644311

Road Safety  
Hydebank  
4 Hospital Road  
**BELFAST**  
BT8 8JL  
028 90 253123

Road Safety  
Lisnagelvin Crown Buildings  
Crescent Road  
**LONDONDERRY**  
BT47 2NJ  
028 71 319319

The child car seat web-site at [www.childcarseats.org.uk](http://www.childcarseats.org.uk) also has information about the law, and the fitting and wearing of child restraints.

Should you require a copy of this leaflet in an alternative format or language it can be made available on request.

Further copies of this leaflet can be obtained by telephoning 02890 540049, or textphone 02890 540642, or emailing [roadsafety.clarencecourt@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:roadsafety.clarencecourt@doeni.gov.uk)

Or online at:  
[www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk](http://www.roadsafetyni.gov.uk)