

Child safety is our responsibility

What kind of safety equipment is suitable?

When selecting safety and protective equipment for children, it is important to take your time, examine websites and find out about the range of shops available. The equipment needs to both be appropriate for the child and fit in the car. Likewise, it is extremely important that the child uses the equipment correctly. Seat belts may not be twisted and must fit well on the child's body. Seat belts may never be placed behind the back or under the arm.

Car seat categories are based on weight and it is a good idea to have the child use the seat for as long as possible (until the maximum weight is reached). Please note, however, that the child's head may never be wholly above the top edge of the chair (i.e. ear-level is generally used as reference height).



Good safety equipment that is correctly used is of paramount importance.

When buying safety equipment that is fastened to the car with the seat belt, you must check if it fits in the car in question. You can get this information from the websites of manufacturers or in pamphlets that accompany the equipment. If you are going to be using the same equipment in more than one car you will need to make sure that it fits in all cases.

When safety equipment is installed in a car, it must be done correctly. Even if a child is in the correct equipment, the child can suffer severe injuries if the equipment is incorrectly installed. It is vital that you carefully read all instructions provided with both the car and the safety equipment. You can also ask the sales personnel in the shop to help you to install the equipment.

ISOFIX anchors

Many cars have ISOFIX anchors in their rear seats. The anchors are connected to the car's framework. If you buy a child's car seat with ISOFIX it will fit in all cars that have ISOFIX anchors.

When is it safe to put a child in a forward facing child seat?

Children should face away from the direction of driving for as long as possible, as their heads are rather large and heavy in proportion to their bodies and their neck vertebrae are not fully developed. Using backward facing child seats decreases the likelihood of severe injuries to the spine and brain of the child. The best option is to have the child facing backwards until the age of three. Children under the age of one should never be placed in forward facing car seats.



What kind of safety equipment should children use?

Most children use three types of safety equipment during their life before they start using the seat belt on its own.

Baby seats

The first seat is often called a baby seat, although how long children use this type of seat varies. Most baby seats last until the child has reached 13 kg. However, it is possible to buy seats that last from birth until the child is 18 kg. Such seats cannot, however, be used as carrier cots and are instead kept in the car. Baby seats are also available with a base. The base is fastened to the car using a seat belt or with ISOFIX anchors. The chair is then snapped into place on the base.

Child seat

When the child has outgrown the baby seat it will need a seat intended for children weighing up to 18 or 25 kg. These seats are fastened in the car with a seat belt or with ISOFIX anchors. The child is fastened into the seat with a five-point harness.

Booster seat

When the child has reached 18 or 25 kg it is safe to use a booster seat (booster cushion with back). Using a booster cushion with no back is not recommended as the back provides better protection. The back has loops or notches to thread the seat belt through so that it sits correctly on the child's body. The back provides side collision protection and also prevents the cushion from sliding out from under the child. Booster seat should be used until the child weighs 36 kg or is around 10-12 years of age.

Child safety in motor cars

Important safety aspects

Recognised safety equipment

Only safety and protective equipment for children that meets requirements according to ECE No. 44.04, or later adjustments, may be used in vehicles. The same requirements apply regarding import, marketing and sale of the equipment. Labels specifying whether the equipment meets the requirements can be found on the safety equipment.




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Used safety equipment and useful life of seats

In Iceland, safety equipment can be rented, for example from insurance companies. It is important to check the age of the equipment as the useful life of most car seats is 10 years from the date they are first used. Baby seats, however, generally have a shorter useful life, or five years. We recommend that no more than two children use the same baby seat. The manufacture date of the seat is stated on a label on the chair or stamped on its bottom.

If the equipment is borrowed from friends or family it is vital to check the age of the seat and whether it has suffered any damage, i.e. been used in a car that was in a collision or if the seat was damaged in some other manner (e.g. dropped from a height). Safety equipment can be useless even if it appears to be in good working order and knowing how the seat has been handled can therefore be vital. The Road Traffic Directorate warns against buying equipment from strangers as it can be difficult to obtain reliable information about the equipment. You should keep in mind that if the original instructions for the seat have been lost, they can usually be found on the Internet.

Children and safety airbags

Airbags are dangerous to young children. The risk is in the blow that the child suffers when the airbag inflates rapidly and impacts the head and upper torso. The blow can lead to serious injury or even death. By law, children smaller than 150 cm may not sit in the front seat of a vehicle if the vehicle has an airbag in front of the seat. This applies even if the child is seated in safety equipment.



Further information may be found at www.us.is or by sending an enquiry to fraedsla@us.is

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