CHILD SAFETY WHILE DRIVING

Advice on ensuring child safety in cars

TRANSPORDIAMET

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INTRODUCTION

All parents want to protect their children as much as they possibly can, including when driving. We all have faith in our own driving abilities, but we don't know what experience other drivers have, or how they behave behind the wheel, or when an animal might jump out onto the road. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure their child's safety when driving, meaning the use of age-appropriate, properly affixed safety devices.

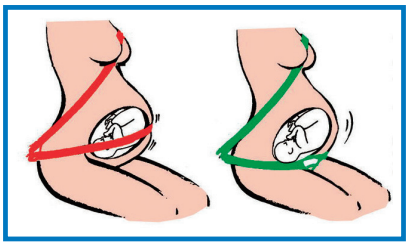
USE OF SEAT BELTS DURING PREGNANCY

Protecting children while driving begins when they are still in the womb.

Pregnant women are not allowed to drive without a seat belt or to put on a three-point belt in a way that is comfortable for them but nevertheless incorrect. This misconception is widespread and is not only dangerous to both the mother and the unborn child, but is also against the law. Pregnant women may only go without wearing a seat belt if they have a written exemption from their doctor allowing them to do so. Otherwise, pregnant women must always wear a seat belt. It is recommended to sit as upright as possible so that the belt provides the best protection to both the mother and the baby inside her.

The incorrect use of a seat belt is as dangerous as driving without wearing one. It is often feared that in the event of sudden braking, the seat belt will swaddle the stomach and endanger the unborn child. To avoid this, you should make sure that the horizontal strap of the seat belt runs beneath the stomach and over the thighs, as close to the hips as possible. Under no circumstances should you thread the seat belt under one or both thighs. Incorrect use of the seat belt will leave you unprotected in the event of an accident.

Incorrect placement of seat belt



Correct placement of seat belt

DRIVING WITHOUT SAFETY DEVICES

If you don't use safety devices in your car, your child will be left vulnerable. The same applies to small children who are placed in safety devices that are meant for larger children or who are only secured with a seat belt.

Parents play a very important role in the use of seat belts – if a parent uses one, their child will follow suit.

Children should be placed **in special safety devices** corresponding to their height and weight. If a child is tall enough to enable the proper use of a seat belt, you won't need any additional safety devices. The seat belt should be secured in such a way that its diagonal strap runs as close to the body as possible across the collarbone between the tip of the shoulder and the neck, not over the neck or below the shoulder, and with the horizontal strap as close as possible to the hip joint, not across the stomach.

In a number of **traffic accidents** in Estonia in which children have been injured while in a car, it has been determined that safety devices were not used. As a consequence of sudden braking or an accident, passengers not wearing a seat belt can be knocked against the car's interior or even thrown clear of the car altogether. In a head-on collision at 50 km/h, an unrestrained child will be catapulted against the back of the seat in front of them or the windscreen with the same force as falling to the ground from the fourth floor of a building. The risk of traffic accidents exists even if you only drive a short distance or at a lower speed.

You should never drive with a child in your lap, as this is dangerous to the child. In the event of sudden braking or an accident:

- if the child is sitting on the lap of an adult who is not wearing a seat belt, they may be crushed between the adult and the car's interior;
- if the child and the adult whose lap they are on are using the same seat belt, the child may be crushed between the adult and the seat belt;
- if the child is sitting on the lap of an adult who is wearing a seat belt, the adult will normally be unable to hold onto the child. Tests have shown that an adult is unable to hold onto a child who weighs 8 kg in the case of a collision where the speed is as low as 24 km/h;
- if the child is sitting on the lap of an adult wearing a seat belt, the mother will grasp the child instinctively so tightly, even at a lower speed, that she may hurt the child due to the strength of her grip.

It is important for parents to understand that child safety devices are designed to protect children.

RULES

All safety devices sold in Estonia must be in line with the standards of the European Safety Requirements and be marked **ECE R44/04** or **ECE R129 i-Size**. The safety of devices with these labels has been tested in both front-on and rear collisions at 50 km/h.

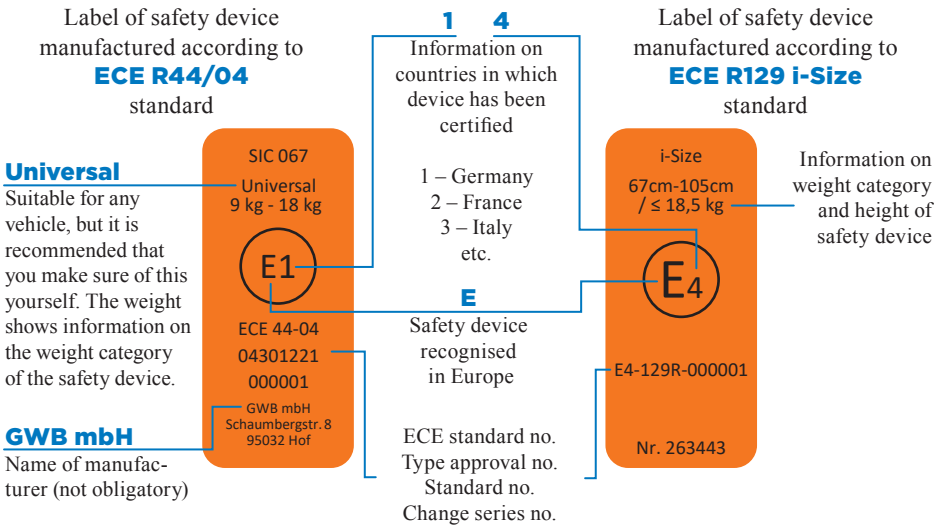
The introduction of the stricter UN/ECE Regulation No. 129 (ECE R129 i-Size) has boosted the safety level of children's safety devices, and all such devices manufactured in accordance with the regulation are tested in collision conditions, making them even safer again.

The ECE R129 i-Size rules classify safety equipment according to the child's height rather than their weight, as height is more important when choosing the appropriate safety device. For example, the strap holders on safety devices for children of different heights should themselves be at different heights (see the section on adjusting seat belts), while the child's weight can be easily compensated for by changing the belt length. The i-Size label helps parents make the safest choices for their children.

Whereas ECE R44/04 permits the use of forward-facing safety seats for children weighing at least 9 kg, ECE R129 i-Size prohibits the use of such seats if the child is younger than 15 months, as their back and spine will not have developed fully by that age and, in the event of an accident, their cervical vertebra will not withstand the weight of their head.

UN/ECE Regulation No. 44 (R44/04)	UN/ECE Regulation No. 129 (ECE R129 i-Size)
Tested in head-on and rear collision conditions. Not tested in side-on collision conditions.	Tested in head-on, side-on and rear collision conditions.
The device can be affixed using either the car's seat belt or the Isofix system.	The device can generally only be affixed using the Isofix system.
Children must face rearwards in the car until they weigh 9 kg (around 10 months of age).	Children must face rearwards in the car until they reach the age of 15 months.
Safety devices categorised according to child's **weight**.	Safety devices categorised according to child's **height**.

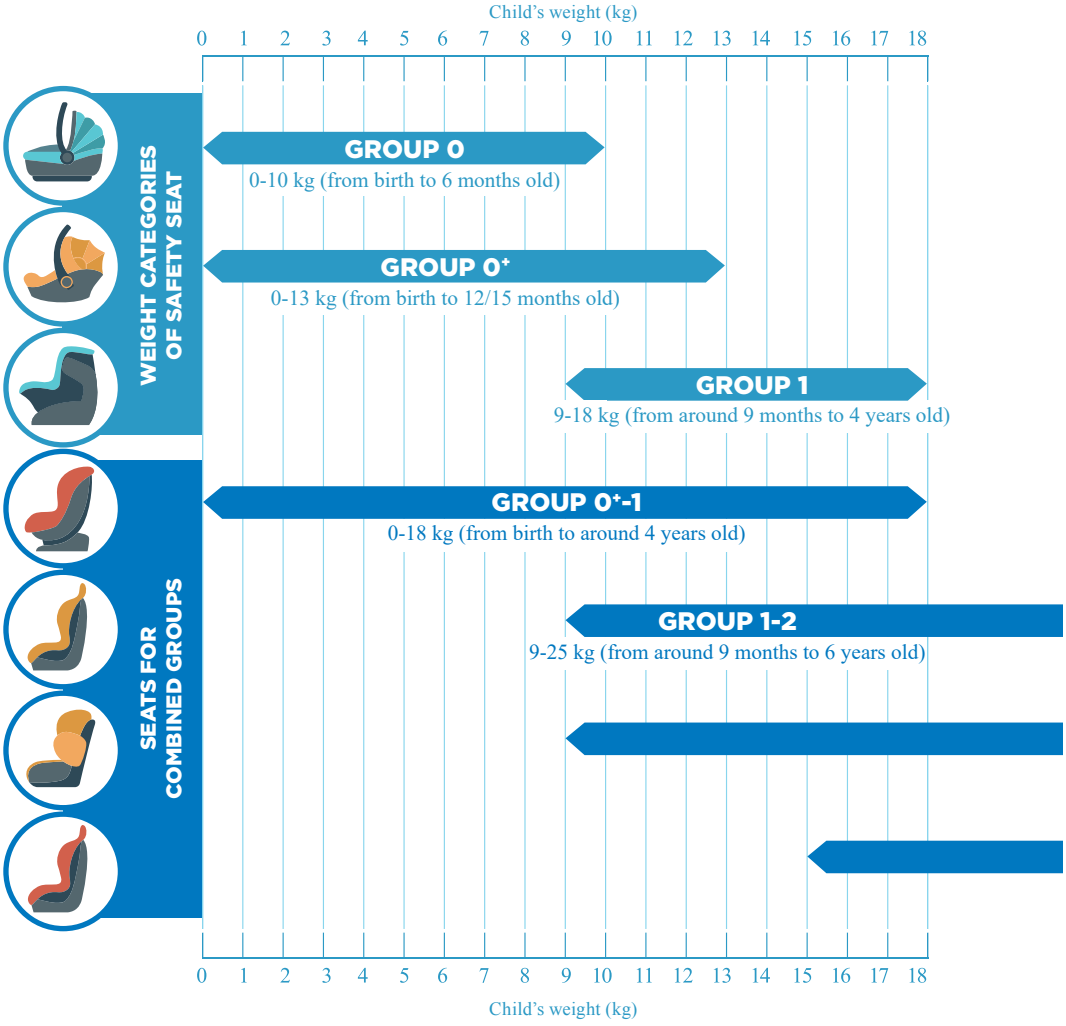
SAMPLE LABELS OF SAFETY DEVICES



"i-Size universal ISOFIX" – suitable for installation in any i-Size-compatible vehicle
"Semi-universal ISOFIX" – suitable for installation in many vehicles
"Specific vehicle ISOFIX" – not suitable for installation in all vehicles

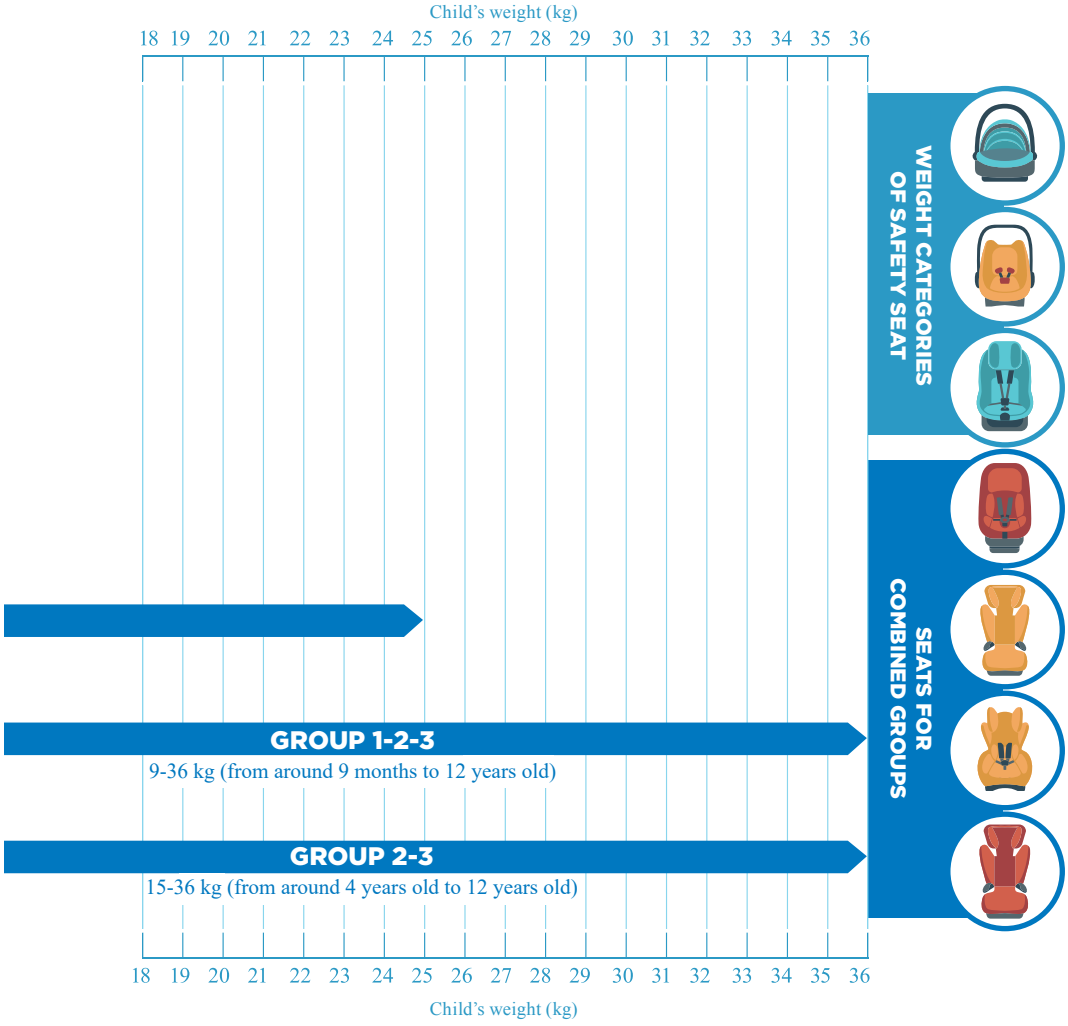
CATEGORIES OF SAFETY DEVICES

If a child's height does not enable them to be properly secured using a seat belt, you must use **a safety device** corresponding to the child's height and weight. Based on the stages in children's development, the safety devices designed for children of different ages have different requirements, which are divided into categories. In colloquial terms, these devices are classified as carry cots, safety seats and booster seats. The groups set out in the table are based on the ECE R44/04 standard.



The child's height/weight ratio may differ and some can e.g. grow out of their carry cot **before even reaching the relevant weight category**. As such, the weight groups of safety devices manufactured according to ECE R44/04 overlap. Safety devices manufactured according to the ECE R129 i-Size standard are based on the child's height, which better characterises how suitable the safety equipment will be for the child. The weight can easily be compensated for by adjusting the length of the strap, but the placement of the strap holder needs to be changed as the child grows.

It is safer to use a safety device that is designed for a particular age group rather than one that covers several age groups. However, there are exceptions which enable you to adjust the height of the backrest, shoulder pads and headrests, making them suitable for both ends of the weight category. If you replace a safety device with a larger one (i.e. designed for the next group up) too soon, it will not provide your child with as much protection in the event of an accident.



CARRY COTS

Carry cots are designed for placing the child in a lying position, and according to the ECE R44/04 standard they are used until the child weighs 10-13 kg. A carry cot which complies with the ECE R129 i-Size standard is often suitable for children up to 15 months of age. When buying a carry cot, make sure you follow the instructions in the user manual regarding the weight and age or height of the child.

Carry cots should always face rearwards in a car. It is not permitted to carry a child in a carry cot **on the front passenger seat** if the front *airbag* system is activated. If the airbag were to open in an accident, it would cause serious injuries to the child.

The child should lie in the carry cot at an angle of **45°**. A baby's proportions are different from those of an adult: their head is significantly heavier compared to the rest of their body. It would be much the same if we placed a bowling ball on our own shoulders. If the child is too upright, their chin will fall to their chest and this may lead to breathing problems, even to the point of suffocation. If the child is not at the right angle in the carry cot, they may experience back pain in adult life.

It is recommended that you only make **short trips** when driving with a newborn. It is not recommended to keep your child in their carry cot for more than two hours at a time. If a child lies in a carry cot for too long, their neck and back come under strain. Clinical studies have shown that being in a semi-sitting position for long periods of time can lead to breathing problems. If you have a longer journey ahead of you, schedule stops so that you can take your child out of their carry cot and let them stretch. A carry cot should not be used as a substitute for a pram. A child should only be kept in a carry cot while in a car, and the cot should not be used as somewhere for them to sleep. It is recommended that you only use a combination of a carry cot and pram wheels in exceptional circumstances.

The main purpose of a carry cot is to protect a child in the event of an accident. It will not offer any protection if it has not been affixed with the car's seat belt or using an Iso-fix attachment.

FROM CARRY COT TO SAFETY SEAT

You should not be in a hurry to replace **your carry cot with a safety seat**. As a rule, a child will fit in a carry cot until they are around 15 months old. Even if their feet begin to extend over the bottom edge of the carry cot, this is not a sign of danger. Their feet may rest against the backrest of the seat and this will not reduce their safety. It is when the child's head starts to extend over the upper edge of the carry cot that it has become too small for them and should be replaced with a new safety device.

When using a safety seat, the child should weigh at least 9 kg and be at least 9 months old. In a safety seat manufactured according to the requirements of UN ECE Regulation No. 129 (i-Size), the child should face rearwards until they are 15 months old.

SAFETY SEATS

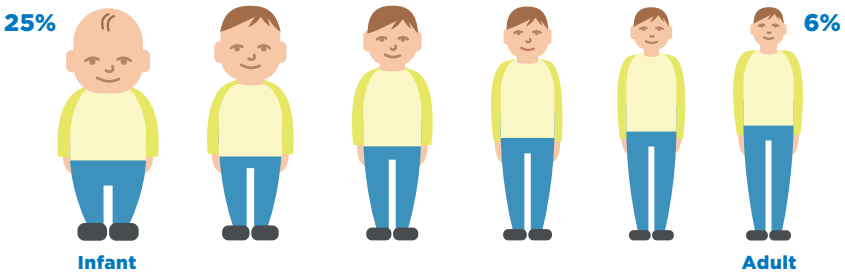
Larger companies producing child safety devices have been working for decades to develop ever-safer, more comfortable and more convenient solutions for safe driving with children in the car. Hundreds of different devices are available in stores, which makes choosing one particularly difficult. Below we highlight the main types of **children's safety seats**.

REAR-FACING SAFETY SEATS

In the event of an accident or sudden braking, a child's head will be thrown suddenly forward in a forward-facing safety seat, resulting in enormous tension on the child's head and neck.

In the 1960s, Swedish researchers discovered the benefits to small children of facing rearwards, and today, almost all Swedes place their children under the age of 4 in **rear-facing safety seats**. This has produced positive results in traffic accident statistics. Sweden records the lowest number of injuries and fatalities in car accidents in Europe involving children.

It is safer for children weighing less than 25 kg to travel **in a rearward-facing position**. Infants are not miniature versions of adults: their heads are disproportionately heavy (accounting for as much as 25% of their body weight, compared to just 6% for adults), their backs and spines are not yet fully developed and, in the event of an accident, their cervical vertebra do not withstand the weight of their heads. Even a slight jolt or accident could have severe consequences. It is highly recommended to sit your child facing rearwards in your car for as long as possible, i.e. **until they are at least 4 years old**. Fear that children don't like facing rearwards or that it is uncomfortable for them is misplaced. Children who travel in a rearward-facing carry cot for a year consider it perfectly natural.



If a child is unable to sit by themselves, their **neck will be too weak** to sit in a forward-facing position in a safety seat and the sitting position will not be natural to them, as it is too burdensome. As such, it is not permitted to place babies in a forward-facing position in a safety seat who have grown out of their carry cot but are still unable to sit independently.

In a rear-facing safety device, the seat cushion functions as **a protective shield** and absorbs most of the impact. Collision tests have shown that the burden on the neck is five times smaller when a child is placed in a rear-facing safety device than in a forward-facing one.

Child in a forward-facing safety seat in the event of a collision or braking (strong pressure on back and neck)

Child in a rear-facing safety seat in the event of a collision or braking (head resting on backrest of safety seat)

However, safety seats intended for the 0-18 kg weight range are not recommended for use from birth, as the resting position of the safety seat with the child's equipment is generally not equivalent to carry cots and excessively burdens the back of a newborn.

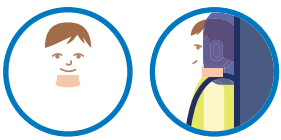
Before buying a rear-facing safety seat, it is important to test how **suitable it is for your car**. It may not fit well in some car interiors.

SAFETY SEATS WITH A FIVE-POINT HARNESS

Safety seats with a five-point harness can be placed in either a forward-facing or rear-facing position.

The seat should be equipped with **proper headrests** that will protect the child in the event of a side-on collision. Proper **cushioning** will ensure your child's comfort. Safety seats with a five-point harness are very different in terms of how they are affixed: some are very easy to affix, while others take more time and require you to follow the instructions.

CORRECT POSITION



TOO LOW

TOO HIGH

CORRECT POSITION

The straps of the child's safety seat should be **tightened against the** child's body. If the straps are too loose, the child may simply push their arms out while the vehicle is moving. The tighter the straps are against the child's body, the greater the protection they will provide in the event of a traffic accident.

It is also important to monitor the **height** of the safety straps – as your child grows, you will have to adjust the safety straps according to your child's height. The safety straps should not remain too low behind the shoulders, but should not be too high either.

It is important that the head is **correctly positioned between** the headrests. If there are hard, protruding headrests, these should not be too close to the shoulders, and it is particularly important that they are not too high compared to the height of the child's head. The best protection is provided by headrests when the child's head is precisely between the headrests and there is up to two fingers' worth of space between the shoulders and the headrests.

SAFETY SEATS WITH A SHOCK ABSORBER

In a safety seat with a shock absorber, the child is not secured in place using a standard seat belt, but a special shock absorber is affixed to the child's stomach over which the car's seat belt is pulled.

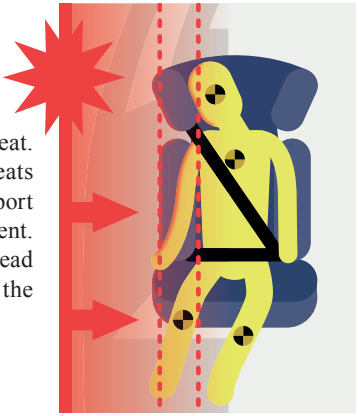
The advantage of this is that the child's shoulders are not fixed in place by the seat belt, meaning that in the event of an impact, not only does the head move forward, but the whole upper body is pressed against the shock absorber.

In the case of a collision, the impact force is distributed equally to all parts of the child's upper body by the shock absorber.

BOOSTER SEATS

Safety seats in which a child is secured using only a seat belt are designed for bigger children.

Many safety seats in the 15-36 kg weight category enable you to adjust the headrests and shoulder pads according to your child's size (width and height). This provides the child with protection whatever their weight, meaning that a preschool-aged child can also be carried in the safety seat. Thanks to headrests and/or side protectors, such safety seats are **much safer** than booster cushions, which do not support or protect a child's head and neck in the event of an accident. They are also more comfortable, as the child can rest their head between the headrests and you don't have to worry about the seat belt cutting into your child's neck.



BOOSTER CUSHIONS

It is not recommended that you rush to start using a booster cushion that enables you to correctly attach the car's **seat belt,** since it lacks the headrest and side protectors needed by a child in the event of a side-on collision.

According to the ECE R44/04 standard, it is permitted to place a child on a booster cushion if they weigh at least 15 kg. However, it is safer to have the child sitting on a safety seat equipped with a backrest, headrest and side protectors.

AFFIXING SAFETY DEVICES

Upon installing a safety device in your vehicle, you must **follow the manufacturer's instructions**. Every device bears a pictogram regarding its proper installation. If the device can be installed in any of several positions, each is described. The installation of the seat belt is indicated either in blue (rear-facing) or red/green (forward-facing).

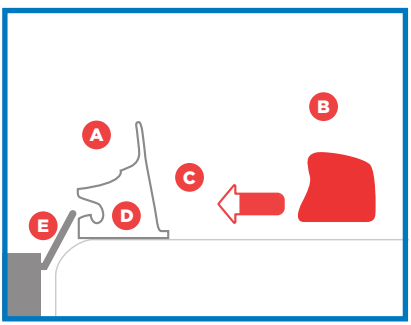
When attaching the device to the seat belt, make sure that all of the straps are tight, all of the support legs are in contact with the floor and that all of the straps holding the child in place have been adjusted to the child's body. None of the straps should be twisted.

Since many mistakes were being made when attaching safety devices to seat belts, the **Isofix** (International Standards Organisation FIX) system was introduced in the late 1990s. Since 2007, Isofix attachments have been included in all cars manufactured in Europe as standard. The Isofix system enables you to affix a child's safety device to a seat easily and without making any mistakes. It is also safer and more convenient to use the Isofix attachments on a safety seat.

The Isofix system features both safety devices and bases for carry cots. The base of a carry cot with such an attachment is firmly fixed to the car seat, and it is possible to place the cot on the seat by using special attachments.

You must use a support leg or upper anchor with **the Isofix attachment** to prevent the rotation of the seats.


Photo: Wikipedia



A Car seat
B Safety seat
C Isofix attachment
D Entry point
E Isofix attachment (anchor) in car

Not all cars are fitted with Isofix attachments – this applies to older models in particular. As such, before buying a safety seat with Isofix attachments, make sure that it is suitable for your car.

USED OR BROKEN SAFETY DEVICES OR DEVICES INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTS

A second-hand safety device **may be dangerous**, as you have no way of knowing what has happened to it. It is often impossible to detect with the naked eye whether a device has been involved in an accident or damaged in some other manner (e.g. falling from a high place). As such, it is recommended to avoid buying a safety device second-hand.

It should also be borne in mind that universal safety devices, which are designed for children in a wide range of sizes from small to relatively large, enable you to remove cushioning elements as the child grows. Therefore, when purchasing such a second-hand device, you should **always make sure that all of the elements** are in place.

Furthermore, a second-hand safety device may lack **a user manual**, so a new user could place it in their car incorrectly.

However, if you do choose to use a second-hand device, purchase it from a family member or close friend to be sure that it has a 'clean past'. If possible, buy one that still has its user manual. Every safety device has its own 'shelf life', i.e. how long you should use it for, which is indicated in the user manual. Usually this is 7-10 years of active use, although this depends on the wear and tear on the parts, sunlight and other factors.

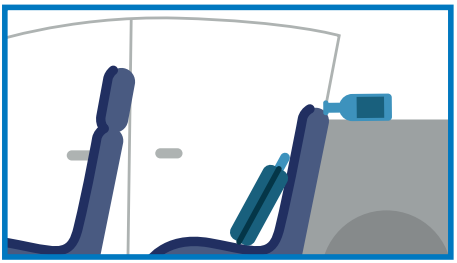
Safety systems in a vehicle at the time of an accident (seat belts, airbags and child safety devices) are not allowed to be repaired. You should assess whether a safety device in a car that has been in an accident is safe to continue using. If you are insured, the insurer will decide whether to cover the cost of replacing safety equipment.

UNAFFIXED SAFETY DEVICES

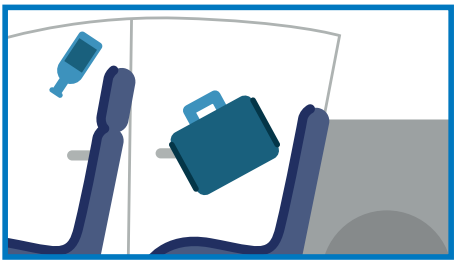
The safety device should be affixed using the **Isofix** attachment or the car's **seat belt**, even when your child is not in the car. A child is often taken out of a safety device, which is then left unaffixed on the car seat. In such cases, the device is a loose item in the car's interior and poses a threat to all passengers in the event of an accident.

The same threat exists if just one person in the car is not wearing a seat belt. In the event of sudden braking or an accident, the passenger who is not wearing their seat belt is a **danger** to the other passengers in the car who are wearing their seat belts. Bags, personal items, pets and any other loose items are potential sources of danger as well.

LOOSE ITEMS IN A MOVING VEHICLE ...



... AND IN THE EVENT OF SUDDEN BRAKING



Everyone and everything in a car moves at the same speed as the car. In the event of braking or a collision, passengers wearing seat belts and secured items slow down as the car does, whereas loose items and passengers not wearing seat belts continue to move at the same speed as before. They only decelerate upon colliding with something: the car's windshield or other passengers who are wearing their seat belts. An abrupt change in speed means that significantly greater force is required to change this speed, and greater force means worse injuries. Loose items can be dangerous even when driving at lower speeds. In a front-on collision at 40 km/h, for example, a half-litre bottle of water flying from the parcel shelf under the rear window will leave you feeling like you have been punched by a world-class boxing champion.

Be sure to secure **all items** in your car. To this end, modern cars offer a variety of options: a divider for use in the boot; a bulkhead; a safety net; plastic or fabric boxes; storage compartments in the interior; and more. As many items as possible should be placed in the boot, and any items in the car's interior should be kept on the floor or affixed to a seat using the seat belt. The more items that are secured, the greater the likelihood that they will remain in place even in the event of sudden braking.

When driving with **a pet**, you must secure the animal using safety straps or carry it in a transport cage. The cage should be affixed to the seat with the seat belt or secured in place in the boot using safety straps.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Which seat is safest for my child?

The safest place for your child in your car is the middle of the back seat, as it is furthest from all possible impact points in a collision. If you are able to affix the safety device to the middle of the back seat, we recommend this as your first choice. Unfortunately, not all vehicles have Isofix attachments in the middle of the back seat. It is important to follow the car and safety equipment manufacturers' instructions regarding what equipment can be affixed where and under what conditions.

How should I choose a suitable safety device?

- In addition to your own car, make a list of the cars in which you are likely to use the device (the child's grandparents' car, your friends' cars, etc.).
- Look for the best possible safety devices that match your child's height and weight on safety test websites (e.g. https://www.adac.de/infotestrat/tests/kindersicherung/kindersitz-test/default.aspx).
- Check which of the selected devices will suit all of the cars you listed.
- Before purchasing the device, try placing it (with your child in it) in your car, if possible.
- If you are buying a carry cot that is secured using a seat belt alone, try affixing it in this way in your car beforehand. The seat belt in your car may be too short for the carry cot to be secured properly.

Will driving my child around in a carry cot or safety seat over a longer period of time cause them orthopaedic problems?

Your child should not lie in one position for too long, as motor development primarily stems from unencumbered movement. Sitting in a semi-upright position for a long time places a burden on an infant's neck and back, and clinical studies have shown that it can also lead to breathing problems. If you have a longer journey ahead of you, schedule stops so that you can take your child out of their carry cot and let them stretch.

Can I affix a safety seat or carry cot to the front passenger seat?

Yes. Bear in mind, however, that you must turn off the passenger-seat airbag if securing a carry cot or rear-facing safety seat on the front passenger seat. In the event of an accident, a child travelling on the front passenger seat could be seriously injured by an inflating airbag. To deactivate the airbag, consult your car's user manual or ask at a service centre.

In the case of a forward-facing safety seat, it is not necessary to turn off the airbag, but you must push the car seat as far back as it will go.

We recommend transporting your child in the front seat only if absolutely necessary. The safest place to carry your child is on the back seat, preferably in the middle.

What should I do if my child somehow manages to undo the seat belt while the car is moving?

Teach your child that they should not undo their seat belt without good cause. If you discover that your child has undone their seat belt, stop the car immediately and fasten it again. Systems that make it impossible to independently undo a seat belt are prohibited. In the event of a traffic accident, third parties must be able to undo the seat belt quickly and easily in order to save your child.

Do not praise your child if they learn how to undo their seat belt, but explain to them the dangers of doing so while the car is moving, and forbid them from doing so. If the safety seat has straps, you might also like to consider replacing it with a safety seat that has a shock absorber. This will leave your child unable to open the seat belt as easily as they could on a five-point harness system.

What could happen if the safety device is not properly installed?

The correct installation of the safety device could save your child's life in a car accident. As such, before installing the device, carefully read the user manual and check and then double-check that you have installed it correctly. The most common problems include the device being affixed too loosely or the incorrect positioning of seat belts.

How tightly should I secure the five-point harness straps on my child?

The straps should be tightened against your child's body. If the straps are too loose, your child may simply push their arms out while the vehicle is moving, and in the event of a collision, they may fly out of the harness. The tighter the straps are against your child's body, the greater the protection they will provide in the event of an accident. Check that there is only one finger's worth of space between the straps and your child's chest.

Monitor the height of the straps as well – as your child grows, the straps should be adjusted according to your child's height. They should not remain too low behind the shoulders, but should not too high either.

The safety straps on the safety seat are too tight. Should I replace the safety seat with a seat from the next weight category up?

Parents often ask this in the colder months, when children are dressed in bulkier winter clothes. We recommend removing your child's winter outerwear while they are in the car rather than replacing the safety seat with one intended for the next age group up too soon. The basic rule is that the tighter the safety straps against the child's body (i.e. without the child wearing winter clothes), the safer the situation for them. During the colder months, you might like to warm up the interior of the car before setting off or to cover the child in their safety device with a blanket. Only buy a new device if the actual weight or height of your child exceeds the permitted limit of the device you are currently using.

Is it OK for my child to be in their winter clothes in the car?

If your child is wearing bulky winter clothes, it will not be possible to correctly attach the safety straps or shock absorber, and these will not be close enough to the child's body. This is very important in the event of a traffic accident, as winter clothes being between the seat belt and the child's body significantly reduces the child's safety. In a collision, the child may fly out of the harness if the safety straps are too loose. Therefore, you should remove your child's winter

clothes while they are in the car and your child should be covered with a warm blanket, placed over the safety seat and straps. If your child is in a carry cot, we recommend that they be in their indoor clothes and using a car seat bag and/or blanket.

Are old safety devices still safe?

It depends on the condition of the device. If you bought the device yourself and know that it has not been in an accident, is not broken and is still within its recommended period of use, then it can continue to be used. The user manual should indicate the 'shelf life' of the device, and the device itself will have a label bearing the manufacturing date.

There are inflatable curtains on the sides of the back seat in my car. Will they be dangerous to my child in their safety seat if they open in an accident?

Unlike airbags in the front seat of a car, inflatable side curtains do not blast outwards with far-reaching force but descend close to the window. It is highly unlikely that they will even touch the safety seat in the event of an accident. Therefore, they will not be dangerous to a child in a safety seat in any way.

I would like to buy a rear-facing safety seat for my child, who is getting too big for their carry cot, but I don't know whether my child will like facing backwards.

Children are placed in a rear-facing position in a carry cot from birth, so they are used to it. The fear that a child will protest against facing backwards is generally unfounded. A safety seat can be adjusted to an upright position in addition to a lying position, and the seat lifts the child up, enabling them to see out the window. However, if you notice that your child wants eye-to-eye contact with you, you can buy a special baby mirror designed for rear-facing safety seats. For the safety of your child, we recommend carrying them in a rear-facing position until they are 4 years old.

The driver and all passengers (in both the front and back seats) are obliged to wear seat belts. This also applies to taxi drivers and passengers. Seat belts should be also fastened on buses where they are available. As an exception, seat belts are not required of a passenger when driving on an ice road if the passenger performs official duties that require making stops up to every 100 metres or if they have a doctor's certificate of contradictions for wearing a seat belt (subsections 30 (1) and (2) and 33 (3) and (6) of the Traffic Act).

REQUIREMENTS OF TRAFFIC ACT WHEN DRIVING WITH A CHILD*

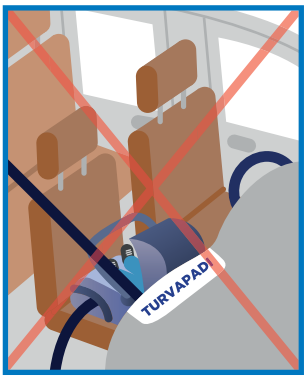
- The driver and all passengers (in both the front and back seats) are obliged to wear seat belts. This also applies to taxi drivers and passengers. Seat belts should be also fastened on buses where they are available. As an exception, seat belts are not required of a passenger when driving on an ice road if the passenger performs official duties that require making stops up to every 100 metres or if they have a doctor's certificate of contradictions for wearing a seat belt (subsections 30 (1) and (2) and 33 (3) and (6) of the Traffic Act).

*As at July 2021

- In cars and trucks, children of less than 3 years of age should not be carried in a seat that is not equipped with a seat belt. In the front seat of a vehicle, a child may only be driven if they are properly secured using a seat belt or safety device. A child of at least 3 years of age and with a height of more than 150 cm may be carried in the front seat of a truck that does not have a seat belt (subsection 36 (5) of the Traffic Act[1]).

- If a child is not tall enough to wear a seat belt in accordance with the requirements established by the vehicle or seat belt manufacturer, a safety device affixed in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements and corresponding to the height and weight of the child should be used when the child is in the vehicle. A rear-facing safety device should not be used when carrying a child in a front seat equipped with an activated front airbag (subsection 36 (6) of the Traffic Act). *This requirement applies to all vehicles. Injuries to a child who is seated in a rear-facing safety device on a seat equipped with an activated airbag may prove fatal in the event of the airbag opening.*

- A child must not be held on a person's lap in the front seat of a vehicle (except a bus) while the vehicle is moving. In a bus, except in its front seat or in the front row of seats, an adult passenger may hold one child under 3 years of age on their lap, provided that the passenger holding the child is wearing a seat belt in accordance with the requirements established by the vehicle or seat belt manufacturer. By way of exception, an adult passenger whose seat belt is not fastened may hold one child under 7 years of age on their lap in a bus, except in the front seat or in the front row of seats (subsection 36 (7) of the Traffic Act).



- If it is not possible to install a safety device in the middle of the back seat of a car due to there being safety equipment for two children, a child of at least 3 years of age should be secured in the middle seat with at least a lap belt designed for adults (subsection 36 (8) of the Traffic Act). *This requirement provides the child with the option of using only the horizontal part of the car's three-point seat belt if the child is too small for the correct fastening of the diagonal strap. The diagonal strap of the seat belt may then run behind the child's back. However, it should be stressed that this exceptional solution does not provide the child with the protection that would otherwise be achieved with a corresponding safety device.*

- Using a child safety device is not compulsory when carrying a child less than 3 years of age in the back seat of a taxi. A child under 3 years of age may be carried in a taxi on the lap of an adult passenger if the passenger holding the child is properly wearing a seat belt and has only one child on their lap. When carrying children older than 3 years of age in the rear seat of a taxi, at least one child should be secured with a seat belt pillow and, depending on the height of the child, with an adult seat belt or only its lap belt or with another appropriate safety device. Other children carried in the rear seat of a taxi should wear at least the lap belt of the adult seat belt (subsection 36 (9) of the Traffic Act).

TIPS FOR DRIVING

- Only ever carry your child in a safety device that corresponds to their height and weight.
- To ensure your child's safety, it is better to opt for a new safety device, especially if you are unaware of the history of a used device.
- Place your child in the car and only take them out from the pavement side of the vehicle.
- On longer journeys, stop for breaks every two hours to give yourself and your child a chance to rest your back and feet.
- Do not place loose items on the parcel shelf under the rear window or on the seats, as in the event of a collision these items could become life-threatening flying objects.
- The driver and all passengers should be properly secured before setting out. This includes pets. Unsecured, both people and animals can cause serious injuries to others (including children in safety seats) in the event of an accident.
- In the case of longer journeys, your child will need to be engaged in something, but any toys in the car should not be heavy or have sharp corners.
- Never leave your child sitting or sleeping in your car on their own.
- Dress your child so that the safety straps are tight against their body.
- Before setting out, check that the doors are locked with the child lock. Small children can unexpectedly open doors while you are driving.
- The driver and all passengers (including children in safety devices) in both the front and back seats must have their seat belts fastened.