

Is your child safely seated?

Many parents and others who transport children are ignorant of the importance of correct safety restraints for small children to ensure their safety.

"While the use of seat belts has a high awareness, though an unacceptably low rate of usage, the need for using different types of restraints for children of different weights and ages, is not general knowledge," says a spokesperson for the Renault-sponsored Saved by the Belt campaign.

"A major issue with the fitment of child restraint devices in South Africa is that they are not mandated by law, which means that enforcement officers cannot police their usage. This is an anomaly in our safety law which needs to be addressed by the authorities on an urgent basis as small children are the most vulnerable occupants of a vehicle."

Child restraint devices work in tandem with adult restraints i.e. seat belts. There are four categories of child restraints and it is important that the right device be used to suit the requirements of your child's physique. These categories are:

• Group 0+

These are used for children between birth and approximately 15 months or 13kg. They are removable, but can have a chassis permanently fixed into the car by an adult seat belt. They may be placed in a push chair using the integrated handle. Type 0 seats are designed to face the rear of the vehicle only.

Rear facing child seats are inherently safer than forward-facing child seats, because they provide more support for the child's head in event of a sudden deceleration. All countries and car seat manufacturers recommend that children continue to use a rear-facing child seat for as long as is physically possible.

• Group 1

These are for children between approximately 9 months and 4 years old and between the recommended weights of 9kg and 18kg. This type is a permanent fixture in the car using an adult seat belt to hold it in place and a five-point harness to hold the infant in a sitting position facing the front or rear.

• Group 2

These are for children between 4 to 6 years with the weight being between 15kg and 25kg. The sitting position is forward and the seat is larger than the group 1 design, using an adult seat belt to hold the child in place.

• Group 3

Children from approximately 6 to 11 years falling in the weight category between 22kg and 35kg should use this restraint. Also known as booster seats, these position the child so that the adult seat belt is held in the correct position for safety and

comfort.

"To ensure the maximum safety for children, parents should ensure that they fit the correct seats; it is more than worth the money," the spokesperson says. "Look for seats that are approved by the European regulatory authorities, and offer the best possible side impact protection," he continues.

"Mounting a rear facing child seat in the front passenger seat is not recommended, and can be very dangerous if the airbag is not deactivated. Also, making sure the seat is in good condition and properly mounted is more important than the quality of the seat."

The Saved by the Belt initiative is the brainchild of the Guild of Motoring Journalists' Committee for Active Road Safety (CARS).

Motorists who owe their lives to having worn a seatbelt in an accident are urged to register with the Saved by the Belt initiative by submitting a short description of their experience via e-mail to , or the Renault website www.renault.com. Registration can also be faxed to Saved by the Belt on 012 803 8399, or by post to:

P O Box 212
La Montagne
0184

People registering with the initiative receive a certificate and a specially designed lapel badge to assist in promoting the benefits of seatbelt usage.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>