

Seatbelts for Children and Adults

How it will save lives?

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Seat Belts: Stay Safe and Secure

One person, one seat belt

Every person travelling in a motor vehicle must wear a seat belt or use a child safety seat. The penalty for seat belt infractions is a fine between \$200 and \$1,000. Convicted offenders will receive two demerit points.

Drivers are responsible for ensuring that passengers under 16 years of age are using the seat belt or an appropriate child car seat.

Police officers may request that passengers who appear to be at least 16 years of age provide their name, address and date of birth. These passengers may face a fine for not using or wearing a seat belt properly.

There are limited exemptions from wearing seat belts.

Fact...

Wearing your seat belt properly will dramatically increase your chance of surviving a motor vehicle collision.

For every one per cent increase in seat belt usage, five lives in Canada are saved (Transport Canada).

Since seat belts were made mandatory, the number of people killed and injured in collisions in Ontario has steadily dropped.

Proper Use of Seat Belts

- ü A properly worn seat belt greatly increases your chances of surviving a motor vehicle collision.
- ü No doubling up — only one person to a seat belt.
- ü A typical seat belt assembly consists of a lap and shoulder belt. The shoulder belt should be worn closely against the body and over the shoulder and across the chest, never under the arm. The lap belt should be firm against the body and low across the hips.
- ü Air bags do not take the place of a seat belt. When air bags activate during a motor vehicle collision, they reduce the forward movement of the upper torso and minimize impact. They do not prevent drivers and passengers from being thrown from the car.

When a seat belt is worn correctly, it will apply most of the collision or stopping forces across the chest and pelvis, which are better able to withstand collision forces. A seat belt should not be worn twisted, as the full width of the belt is required to spread motor vehicle collision forces across the body.

Wearing a seat belt loosely or placing the shoulder belt under the arm or behind your back instead of across the chest, could, in the case of a collision or sudden stop, result in an injury-producing impact with the vehicle interior, or ejection from the vehicle. Wearing a lap belt across the stomach, instead of low across the hips, allows collision forces to be applied to the soft tissue of the body, increasing the chance of injury.

Pregnant women must wear seat belts — wearing the lap and shoulder belt and sitting as upright as possible. The lap belt should be worn low so it pulls downward on the pelvic bones and not directly against the abdomen.

Seat Belts and the Law

- All Ontario motor vehicle drivers and passengers must wear a seat belt in a properly adjusted and securely fastened manner.
- A driver can be charged and face a fine totalling \$240 (\$200 set fine, \$35 victim surcharge, \$5 court costs) and two demerit points for seat belt infractions. Demerit points remain on a driving record for two years from the date of the offence.
- All motor vehicle drivers are responsible for ensuring that all children under 16 years of age are properly secured in a seat belt or an appropriate child car seat or booster seat.

Using a seat belt is the single most effective way to reduce the chance of injury or death in a motor vehicle collision. Over 92 percent of Ontarians wear their seat belt regularly. However, those 8 percent who do not represent over 600,000 people. It's easy to see the difference wearing a seat belt makes — for every one percent increase in seat belt use five lives are saved.

At all times, limit the number of occupants in your vehicle to the number of seat belts. Unbelted occupants can become projectiles during a collision and can seriously injure themselves, other passengers or the driver.

You must wear a seat belt whenever you travel in a motor vehicle, including a taxi. It is the taxi driver's responsibility to ensure that the seat belt is available and in good working order. Taxi drivers are responsible for ensuring that passengers under the age of 16 are wearing seat belts. The law does not require the taxi driver to provide a child car seat. When travelling in a taxi with a child, you may provide your own child car seat or booster seat.

Children and Seat Belts

- The motor vehicle driver is responsible for ensuring that all children under 16 years of age are properly secured in a motor vehicle.
- Babies, toddlers, pre-schoolers and primary-school aged children must travel in the appropriate child car seats or booster seats.
- Children under 13 years of age are safest in the back seat of a motor vehicle, away from any potential point of impact.
- To effectively use a seat belt, a child must be able to sit with legs bent comfortably over the vehicle seat and with his or her back fully against the back of the vehicle seat. The lap belt must cross over the hips (not the stomach) and the shoulder belt must cross between the shoulder and the neck.

Motor vehicle drivers who fail to ensure that children in their vehicle are properly secured in a seat belt or child car seat could be charged and face a fine totalling \$240 (\$200 set fine, \$35 victim surcharge, \$5 court costs) and two demerit points, and risk injury to the child.

Passengers those who are 16 years of age and older are responsible for buckling themselves up. If stopped by a police officer, passengers aged 16 and older must provide their name, address and date of birth to the officer. They can face fine of \$240 (\$200 set fine, \$35 victim surcharge, \$5 court costs) for not using or wearing their seat belt properly.

Child passengers who sit in the back seat, particularly in the middle of the back seat, are less likely to be injured during a motor vehicle collision. An exception is if the back seat is the auxiliary seat of a light-duty truck, then the child should sit in the front, but only if there is not an active airbag.

Children who have outgrown their child car seat have not developed the physical characteristics and size for adult seat belts to be fully effective. They must use a booster seat.

Booster seats are required for children under the age of eight, weighing 18 kg or more but less than 36 kg (40-80 lbs) and who stand less than 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall.

A child can start using a seatbelt alone once any one of the following criteria is met:

- Child turns eight years old
- Child weighs 36 kg (80 lb.)
- Child is 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall

Infants less than 9 kg (20 lb.) must be secured in a rear-facing infant car seat. Toddlers 9-18 kg (20 - 40 lb.) who are about a year old and can also pull themselves unassisted to a standing position should travel in a forward-facing child car seat secured by both a seat belt (or LATCH/UAS system) and a tether strap, attached to an anchor bolted into the vehicle's frame. Your local public health unit will be able to provide you with information on child passenger safety as well as inform you about upcoming child car seat inspection clinics. Public health units have trained personnel who can provide workshops or information about child car seats, or hold child car seat inspection clinics.

Seat Belt Exemptions

Seatbelt exemptions continue to include:

- Driving a motor vehicle in reverse
- People with medical certificates saying that they are unable to wear a seatbelt
- People engaged in work that requires them to exit from and re-enter the vehicle at frequent intervals, as long as they are traveling less than 40 km/h
- Police or peace officers while transporting a person in custody
- Person in police custody while being transported
- Employees and agents of Canada Post engaged in rural mail delivery
- Ambulance attendants and any other persons being transported in the patient's compartment of an ambulance
- Firefighters in the rear of a fire department vehicle while engaged in work that makes it impractical to wear a seatbelt
- Taxi cab drivers while transporting a passenger for hire. When travelling **alone** in the vehicle, taxi cab drivers **must** wear a seatbelt.

For vehicles that were not manufactured with seatbelts, the following exemptions apply:

- Buses (including school buses)
- Other large commercial vehicles (over 4,536 kg), which do not require seatbelts to be installed in rear seating positions at the time of manufacture
- Historic vehicles that were not manufactured with seatbelts

Bibliography

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/seatbelt.shtml>