

Using Taxis

In NYC in 2000 (the most recent year for which data are available) 2,600 children were injured in 17,000 taxi-related accidents. Studies show that NYC taxi passengers are 2.5 times more likely to be seriously injured or killed than the passengers in the other vehicle involved in the crash.

Accidents happen - but you can prevent injuries. Have NO REGRETS; protect your children. Make sure that quick taxi ride to school or a playdate doesn't send your child to the hospital.

{mospagebreak title=Why Use a Safety Restraint?}

Why use a safety restraint in a taxi?

Despite the fact that taxis are usually "not going very far," they're involved in 27% of all crashes in Manhattan. Moreover, taxis are involved in 17% of all fatal crashes in Manhattan. A comprehensive report on taxi crashes found that passengers in taxis are three times more likely to be relatively seriously injured than passengers in other vehicles involved in the same crash. Why wear a safety belt or use a car seat in a taxi; taxi passengers not wearing a restraint are twice as likely to sustain relatively severe injuries as those wearing a restraint.

Who should use a safety restraint in a taxi?

Everyone. Adults should buckle up not only for their own safety, but also for everyone else's.

In a crash an unrestrained object becomes a flying missile, weighing its weight multiplied by the speed of a crash. An unbelted adult can weigh more than the vehicle itself during a crash! An infant held in a father's arms will weigh more than 300 pounds in a 30mph crash. No one can catch a 300 pound brick. So too, no one can hold onto an infant in the instant of a crash.

{mospagebreak title=Choosing a Restraint}

What safety restraints are appropriate for taxis?

Depending on age and size, taxi passengers have several restraint options: seat belts; booster seats; convertible seats; and infant seats.

Seat belts: Adults and children who pass the 5-step test should use a shoulder-and-lap belt. A lap-only belt is less preferable, as it provides no upper body restraint, leaving the head at risk for serious injury as it travels forward, especially in a taxi with a divider screen. Therefore, it's better for an adult to ride in front with the shoulder-and-lap belt than in back with a lap-only belt. If someone must ride where there is a lap-only belt, they should definitely wear their safety belt, as it will keep them much safer than they would be without a safety belt. Never let anyone wearing a safety belt place the shoulder belt behind their back or under their arm – this is very dangerous.

Booster seats: 4-8 year olds are 59% safer in boosters than with just a seat belt. Boosters keep the seat belt on the strongest parts of the body--the hip bones and collar bone. Without a booster, a child is at risk for safety belt syndrome –

lower spinal cord injuries in addition to injury to the abdominal organs including the liver, kidneys, spleen, intestine, and bladder – as the lap belt rides up over the child's underdeveloped hip bones and into the abdomen. Boosters require no installation. Here are a few backless boosters & one vest that all weigh less than 5 pounds (making them easy to take in a taxi).

- Combi Kobuk backless (4.5 lbs) Booster
- Cosco Ambassador & High Rise Booster
- Evenflo Big Kid AMP Booster
- Graco TurboBooster backless Booster
- Harmony Baby Armor (3.3 lbs) & Lite Rider (2.8 pounds) Boosters
- Safe Traffic System Ride Safer Travel Vest (1.4 lbs). This vest functions like a booster seat to keep the vehicle's seat belt properly positioned on the child's body & is so compact it will fit in a small purse

If you would like to keep your child in a 5 point harness with the convenience of a booster:

- Safety 1st Go Hybrid (formerly the Safeguard Go)
- 5-point harness for kids up to 60 lbs
- booster to 100 lbs
- Needs the top tether (only when using 5-point harness)
- Lightweight (9 lbs) & comes in a travel bag.

Another option is the RideSafer Travel vest – this is more compact than the booster and requires the child to wear it before getting into the taxi (to save time). This vest functions as a booster by positioning the safety belt properly over the child's body.

Note – the Cosco/Safety 1st Tote N' Go DX is also a vest but functions not as a booster seat, but as a forward-facing car seat. With any forward-facing car seat, the goal is to keep the child's head from traveling forward in a crash. Unfortunately, I have not been able to satisfactorily install the Tote N'Go in any taxi – a child riding in it would be able to bend all the way forward, their chest touching their thighs, allowing the head to travel dangerously far forward, possibly hitting the divider screen.

Convertible Car Seats: Once the baby outgrows the infant carrier, the Sit N' Stroll is an excellent option, because it's a convertible car seat (birth to 30lbs. rear-facing and 22-40lbs. forward facing) with a built-in stroller. While you can install any convertible car seat in a taxi, the Sit N' Stroll is unique because you don't have to carry the car seat--you simply use it as a stroller until you need to get into a vehicle.

Due to the placement of the belt routing path (over the baby's legs for rear-facing and across the baby's chest for forward-

facing) you must install the Sit N' Stroll with the child in the seat and uninstall the car seat before removing the child from the seat. This is fine for use in taxis and in other situations when you won't be leaving the seat in the vehicle, but isn't practical for everyday use in your own vehicle.

Also note that due to the size and shape of the Sit N' Stroll it's usually not possible to get it installed to less than 1 inch of side-to-side movement when using it rear-facing. Most parents can get an infant carrier like the Graco Safe Seat installed more securely – so using an infant carrier with a higher weight limit before switching to the Sit N' Stroll is a wise idea.

When using the Sit N' Stroll forward facing, it's very important to use the tether strap whenever possible, as this will reduce how much the child's head moves forward by at least 4 inches.

The Radian, a new convertible seat by Sunshine Kids, is unique in that it folds flat (6 inches). It accommodates children up to 35 pounds rear-facing (although many find it difficult to get a secure installation rear-facing due to the location of the safety belt/LATCH belt routing path.) It's a forward-facing car seat for children up to 65 pounds. The compact nature of this car seat and its optional travel bag makes it convenient for travel, but due to its weight (20 lbs), some parents might find it too heavy and may prefer to use a travel bag with wheels or an entirely different seat.

Combination Seats: The Safeguard Go is a car seat with a 5-point harness for children 30-60 pounds who are at least 1 year of age and at least 34 inches tall. This seat has many advantages for travel since it folds compactly into its own travel bag and weighs just 9.5 pounds. It can be installed in less than 1 minute in any vehicle with a tether anchor (all vehicles model year 2000 and newer in the US have tether anchors factory installed.)

Infant Carriers: Of the infant seats currently available, the Graco Snugride 35 will last the longest by far due to its tall seated height and high weight limit (35 pounds). Virtually every baby will still fit in the Snugride 35 at 12 months of age, and most will fit until they're closer to 18-24 months. To dispel a common misconception, the Snugride 35 carrier is only ½ a pound heavier than the smaller versions of the Graco Snug Ride carrier, which has only a 22 pound weight limit. Here is a list of strollers that accommodate a wide variety of infant carriers. Most car seat manufacturers also make strollers that fit their particular infant carrier and may sell the stroller and carrier as a travel system.

Metal Frames

Infant Carriers: An infant carrier that snaps onto a stroller frame is the easiest way to take a baby safely in a taxi. An infant carrier that is tallest in seated height (where the baby's bottom rests to the top of the car seat) and has a high weight limit (greater than 22 pounds) will last the longest. Watch this video to learn how to properly install your infant carrier (without its base.) All infant carriers except the Peg Perego Primo Viaggio and the Evenflo Embrace can be used without their base. (The Peg Perego Primo Viaggio SIP can be used without its base).

- Combi Flash EX
- Kolcraft Universal Car Seat Carrier
- Baby Trend Snap N' Go

- Maclaren Easy Traveller
- Graco SnugRider (only accepts Graco infant carriers)

Infant Toddler Strollers

- Inglesina Zippy
- Peg Perego P3
- Peg Perego Aria
- Maclaren Global
- Bugaboo (only fits Graco Snug Ride. While Bugaboo says that it fits the Graco Safe Seat, we DO NOT recommend using the Safe Seat on the Bugaboo. Doing so will likely break the mechanism that secures the Safe Seat carrier to the stay-in-car base – possibly allowing the carrier to detach from the base in a crash.)
- Mountain Buggy Urban Single or Double
- Double Decker/Triple Decker (Graco Snug Ride and some Evenflo carriers.)

{mospagebreak title=BabyBjorns?}

Will a BabyBjorn protect a child in a taxi?

While your girlfriend might use it for her baby and your pediatrician might even have said it's OK, the Baby Bjorn (or any other type of soft infant carrier – Snuggli, etc) will not protect a baby in a crash.

Researchers Kathleen Weber and John Melvin of the Highway Safety Research Institute at the University of Michigan Medical School tested this scenario using a 30 mph, front, dynamic crash test of the type required by the current federal safety standard for child car seats. In the crash test, an adult held the baby in a soft, cloth front carrier like the Baby Bjorn and used a lap/shoulder belt. The researchers found that this infant was at a very high risk. The tested carrier shredded completely, ejecting the infant dummy into the dashboard. If the carrier had not shredded, they found that the infant would likely still not have survived. As the adult's head traveled forward in the whiplash motion, the adult's chin would have slammed down into the infant's head right where the soft spot is.

If you find yourself in a taxi with just your infant and a Baby Bjorn (hopefully you never will), there is no way to protect your baby. However, you can still protect yourself by wearing your seatbelt. Putting the seatbelt over you and the baby will only make matters worse. It will not help the baby and will endanger you in the process.

{mospagebreak title=If You Don't Have a Car Seat With You}

What if you don't have a car seat with you? Can't you just buckle up your child in a safety belt or hold the child on your lap?

The primary job of a safety belt is to keep you from being ejected from the vehicle. The younger and smaller the child, the less effective the safety belt will be in both preventing injury and ejection from the vehicle, because the safety belt was designed for a 50th percentile adult male. A child less than 1 year old and less than 20 pounds will likely receive no benefit if placed in a safety belt due to their small body size, large head, and inability to sit unsupported. A child of this

age and size must always ride in an age/weight appropriate rear-facing car seat.

So too, a child over 1 and 20 pounds should also always ride in an age/weight appropriate car seat. Realizing that many NYC toddlers ride in taxis without a car seat, often held on the lap of an adult, it is important to note that holding a child is the worst option of all as no one is strong enough to hold the child in the instant of a crash. In a crash, the child becomes much heavier than normal and will fly forward either into the divider screen or out the windshield. Therefore, should a toddler ever be in a vehicle without a car seat, this child may receive some benefit from wearing a safety belt due to their larger body size and ability to sit unsupported.

If you must place your toddler in a seat belt, place him in a shoulder-and-lap belt (not just a lap belt – unless the shoulder belt is resting across the child's face). Pull the safety belt so it's very snug and so the lap portion of the belt is resting very low and very snug on the tops of the child's thighs. Never let the child place the shoulder belt behind their back or under their arm, since this is very dangerous and increases the chance of head, abdominal, and spinal cord injuries.

Never use 1 seat belt for two people – i.e. don't let your child sit on your lap and put the seat belt over both of you. One person, one seat belt. In a crash, everything will weigh its weight multiplied by the speed of a crash – if you are 100 pounds and are in a 30mph crash, you will weigh approximately 3000 pounds. If there's something between your body and the seat belt (like a child sitting on your lap) your body will crush the child.

{mospagebreak title=Where Should Everyone Sit?}

Where should everyone sit?

While the center of the back seat is statistically the safest place in the vehicle (because you can never take a direct impact there), it might not always be the best place to ride, depending on which type of seat belt it has. If the center has only a lap belt (no shoulder belt), it would not be the safest place for an adult or a child using a booster seat. These people are better served with a shoulder-and-lap belt that can offer upper body restraint not found in a lap-only belt.

A child in a rear or forward-facing car seat can ride very safely with a lap-only belt because they have the car seat's harness to offer upper body restraint.

Now that the newer taxis have shoulder-and-lap belts in all 3 rear seating positions, where someone sits is no longer much of an issue.

{mospagebreak title=Tips For Using Taxis}

Won't the driver start to drive away before I can secure the car seat in the taxi?

A helpful tip to avoid this situation: Do not close the taxi door until you have finished installing the car seat and have buckled your own safety belt. Closing the door is your signal to the cab driver that you are ready to go.

Many parents find it helpful to ask the driver to start the meter immediately and also to hand him a dollar right away (just factor this into the tip at the end) – this might show him that you respect his time and pacify him as you take the minute to

install the baby's car seat.

{mospagebreak title=Taxi Videos}

Taxi Videos

These videos show what happens to you and your child in some common taxi scenarios.

Taxi Video 1: What happens to your child if you buckle yourself in and try to hold on to him or her?

Taxi Video 2: What happens to you and your child if neither of you wear a seat belt?

We have decided not to show pictures of what happens when you buckle a child into your seat belt (they sit on your lap). Images of a child cut in half are too gruesome for this website.