

Safer Journeys with Kids

Tips to Keep Kids in Booster Seats



The Minister of Transport recently announced the Government's 10-year road safety strategy, *Safer Journeys*, and one of its aims is to raise the minimum age when children can stop using child car restraints and just use adult seatbelts.

So what impact does raising the minimum age requirement have on parents and children?

For parents, they would have to keep kids in Booster Seats longer. While some parents may find this unnecessary-- thinking kids 5 years and older are 'big enough'-- doctors at Starship Children's Health say they should think again.



Dr. Gabrielle Nuthall of Starship's Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, said parents are risking the lives of their children if they prematurely move them to just using adult seatbelts. "Seatbelts are designed to fit adults, not kids. When kids use a seatbelt that doesn't fit them properly, this can cause severe head, spine and abdominal injury in a crash."

Studies show that Booster Seats can reduce the risk of serious and life-threatening injuries to children 5 to 9 year olds by 52%. "Booster seats raise a child's sitting height, making sure the shoulder strap and lap belt are correctly and safely positioned on a child." Dr. Nuthall added.

New Zealand has one of the highest child road fatality and injury rates in the OECD, accounting for 17 percent of all child deaths and at least one child hospitalised every week. "One of the major reasons for this is the current limitation on the mandatory use of restraints beyond the age of 5," said Ann Weaver, Safekids New Zealand Director.

Countries such as the UK have strengthened their child restraints laws with much success. In the first year booster seats were made mandatory, there were a thousand less children seriously injured or killed in crashes in the UK.

"The Government has now taken up the challenge in developing a long term strategy that hopefully will see fewer children killed or injured on our roads," Ann said.

Tips to keep kids in booster seats

Sometimes children feel embarrassed to use a booster seat, making it a challenge for parents and caregivers to keep them in one. Below are tips to keep kids safely restrained in the car.

- ✓ **Keep using boosters even after the 5th Birthday.** Remember: it's easier to keep kids in boosters longer than trying to convince a child to start using one again.
- ✓ **Be a role model.** Praise them for being buckled in their booster, just as you are buckled in your seatbelt. Praise them again for role modelling good safety behaviour to younger siblings.
- ✓ **Boosters are COOL and NOT Baby Seats.** Race car drivers use seats that are very similar to boosters, with similar safety benefits. Explain how boosters work and how they keep kids safe.
- ✓ **Make it fun.** Jazz it up and turn it into a pirate ship, a rocket or a fairy chariot!

- ✓ **Remember 148cm.** The simplest way to tell if a child needs to stay in a booster seat is if they're under 148cm tall.

For tips and information in keeping kids safe on the road, at home and at play, visit www.safekids.org.nz.

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About Safekids New Zealand

Safekids New Zealand is the injury prevention service of Starship Children's Health and a member of SAFE KIDS Worldwide. Our mission is to reduce the incidence and severity of unintentional injuries to New Zealand's children aged 0 - 14 years.

For more information, contact Anthony Rola at anthonyr@adhb.govt.nz, or visit www.safekids.org.nz or call 09 631 0717.