



# Seven years and over

## My child has turned seven – does that mean he/she can now move out of their booster seat or car seat?

The law states that children seven years and over must use an approved child restraint or properly adjusted and securely fastened seat belt while sitting on a vehicle seat.

Vehicle seats and seatbelts are designed for adult bodies, so it's highly unlikely your child will fit an adult seatbelt correctly by the time he/she reaches their seventh birthday. A child doesn't usually fit an adult seatbelt until they're at least 145cm tall, which is the average height for a 10 to 12-year-old, so they'll need to stay in a restraint until they're at least this height.

Keep in mind that seatbelt fit will vary from vehicle to vehicle and even from position to position in the same vehicle, so it's important to check their seatbelt fit using the three-point test shown overleaf.

Children that move into an adult seatbelt too early are twice as likely to suffer devastating injuries in a crash, including severe damage to the brain, liver, spleen, stomach and spinal cord.

A booster seat (image 1) or extended harness seat (image 2) needs to be used until they can fit the seatbelt properly. Boosters make both the sash and the lap part of the seatbelt fit correctly to ensure maximum crash protection, whereas extended harness seats use a built-in five-point harness.

There are now several models of booster seats and extended harness seats on the market that accommodate children up to the height needed to wear an adult seatbelt correctly.

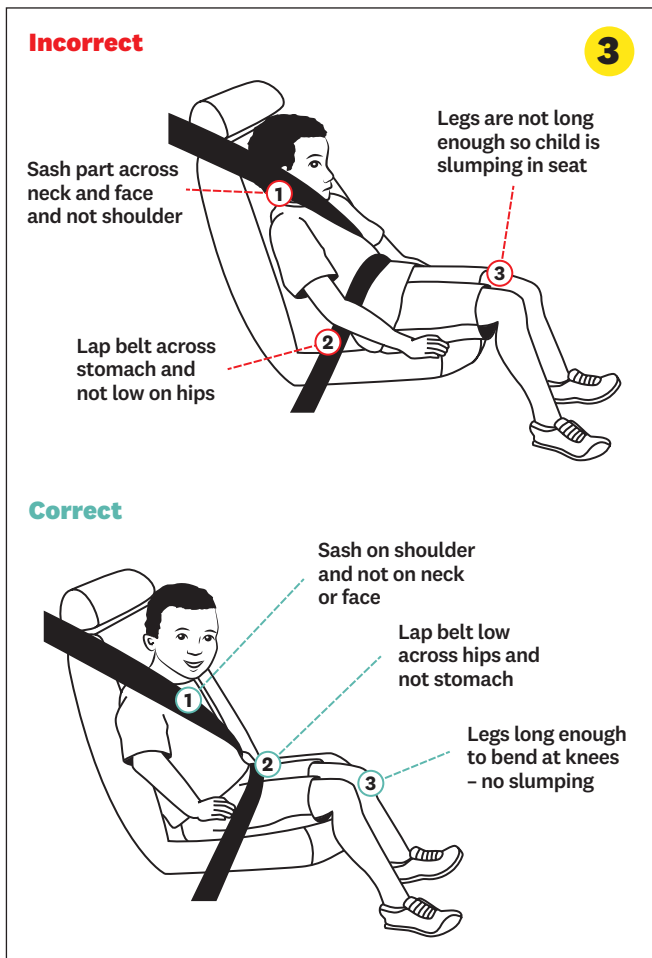


### Three-point test

If your child's not using a child restraint, or you're considering taking them out of one, try this simple three-point test. Please refer to image 3 below. You may find that your child is not yet ready to use an adult seatbelt correctly without a restraint.

1. Does the sash part of the seatbelt sit on the middle of the shoulder and not touch the neck or face?
2. Does the lap part of the seatbelt sit low down on the hips and not on the abdomen?
3. When you sit the child on the seat with their bottom all the way back, are their thighs long enough for their knees to bend, allowing their legs to hang over the front of the seat?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, your child needs to be in a child restraint – either a booster or extended harnessed seat – for maximum protection in a crash.



### Can my seven-year-old sit in the front seat?

It's legal for children seven years and older to sit in the front row of a vehicle providing they're correctly restrained. However, if the vehicle has a passenger-side airbag, it's not recommended until they're at least 12. Most vehicle manufacturers warn against placing children in this position under the age of 12, as the airbag is designed for the protection of adults. For the safety of the child, these warnings should be followed.

There is another consideration – children of this age still require a restraint in most cases and most restraints have a top tether. This prohibits their use in the front seat because this position doesn't have an anchor point. So, it's best to keep them in the back for as long as you can. Image 4 shows a child over 7 years of age wearing the seatbelt correctly.



### We're here to help

For more information on child restraints, call the RAA Safety Centre on **8202 4592**, email [childrestraints@raa.com.au](mailto:childrestraints@raa.com.au) or visit [raa.com.au/childsafety](http://raa.com.au/childsafety)