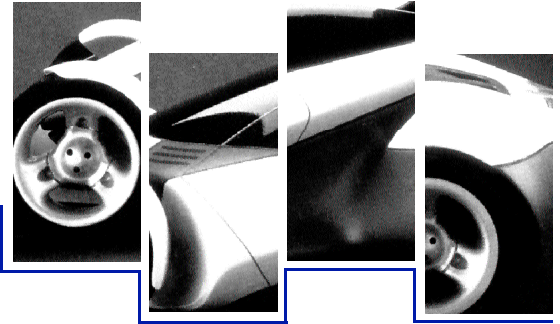


NHTSA FACTS

S U M M E R 1 9 9 6



PREGNANCY: PROTECTING YOUR UNBORN CHILD IN A CAR

Many women make significant changes in their lifestyle when they are pregnant to ensure a healthy baby. They rest more; watch their diet more carefully; avoid alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes; and exercise regularly. They are less likely to take chances.

But some pregnant women refuse to use safety belts. They refuse to wear the belt because they think that in a crash it may harm them and their unborn baby. They are wrong. The safety belt is the best protection for both mother and unborn child.



INSIDE

- Protecting Your Unborn Child
- I don't need to wear a belt because...
- Auto Safety Hotline



U.S. Department
of Transportation

National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration

Safety Belts and Pregnancy

Fear of injury to the unborn baby often makes pregnant women question the wisdom of using safety belts. They want to know if the pressure of a safety belt will increase the risk of injury to the baby or cause a miscarriage. *There is no evidence that safety belts increase the chance of injury to the baby, uterus, or placenta, no matter how severe the collision.*

The mother's body provides many cushions to protect her baby. Bones, muscles, organs, and amniotic fluid that surround the baby soften the blow. In a crash, the pressure of the safety belt may briefly squeeze the baby in the amniotic sac.

The main risk to the baby is injury or death of its mother. Injuries and death to the baby are closely related to the extent of injury sustained by its mother. Mothers who wear safety belts sustain fewer injuries than those who do not, reducing the risk to the baby.

The Risk

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans from ages 5 to 32. About 110 people are killed and another 1,000 people suffer injuries requiring hospitalization in motor vehicle crashes each day. The unborn child's safety depends on its mother's safety. In fact, the unborn baby is most at risk if its mother--its life support system--dies.

Many needless deaths could be prevented by proper and regular use of safety belts and child safety seats. Most states now have laws requiring all occupants to wear safety belts and all states require child passengers to be placed in safety seats.

ABOUT DRIVING WHILE PREGNANT

What Happens In A Crash?

In less than a second after impact, the vehicle will come to a stop. Just after the vehicle comes to a stop, unrestrained occupants will slam into the car's interior. Next,

How Restraint Systems Work

By holding you in your seat, a safety belt allows you to stop as the car is stopping, thereby enabling you to ride down the crash.

When the car finally stops, you are traveling far slower than you would be if unrestrained.

In a front-end crash, supplemental air bags provide even greater benefit by spreading the forces across a larger area of the body. They keep the front seat occupants from striking the steering wheel, dashboard, windshield and interior posts. However, even with an air bag, a safety belt must be worn to protect the occupant in side impact and rollover crashes. The difference between the restrained person's stopping distance and the unrestrained person's stopping distance is often the difference between life and death.

How To Wear Safety Belts During Pregnancy

Lap belts, as well as the lap portion of a lap-shoulder belt combination, should be placed low, across the hips and over the upper thighs. They must lie snugly over the pelvis, one of the stronger bones of the body. *Never place the belt over the abdomen.* Adjust the shoulder belt for a snug fit. If it cuts across your neck, reposition your car seat for a better fit. ■

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internal organs will collide with other organs or the skeletal system. In a 30-mph crash, an occupant will strike the interior of a car with a force of several thousand pounds.

During a crash, the safety belt distributes the forces of rapid deceleration over larger and stronger parts of your body, such as the chest, hips, and shoulders.

"I DON'T NEED TO WEAR A BELT BECAUSE..."

"I'm a good driver. I never take chances."

You're taking a big risk by driving without buckling up.

Seat belts are the single most important safety equipment and even professional race drivers, arguably the best drivers, wouldn't think of driving without buckling up.

"My car has an air bag. It will protect me."

Air bags are designed to supplement your seat belts.

They are not designed to inflate in side, rear or roll-over crashes. You need *both* for the best all-around protection.

"I don't drive that much, and when I do, it's only near where I live."

Most crashes occur within 25 miles of home.

It only takes a couple of seconds to buckle up. But, one crash can take a lifetime of recovery.

"I don't drive. I let others do the driving."

You still need the protection of a seat belt. No driver, no matter how courteous, can guarantee the safety of his passengers. Smart passengers buckle up every trip.

"I'm afraid the car might catch on fire and I'll be trapped."

The risk of a crashed car catching on fire is less than 1 in 200. Being trapped in a fire is very unlikely.

A seat belt can prevent you from being severely injured or knocked unconscious which would enable you to get out of the car in the unlikely event there is a fire.

"What if I sit in the back seat? Do I still need to buckle up?"

Statistically, the back seat is the safer place to ride. But, you are always safer when belted. Why not give you and your baby the best protection available by buckling up?

IF YOU THINK YOUR MOTOR VEHICLE HAS A SAFETY PROBLEM, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE (800) 424-9393

If you think that your vehicle has a safety problem, you can assist the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by completing and mailing back the Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) included with this fact sheet, or calling the Auto Safety Hotline.

The toll-free Hotline number, (800) 424-9393, can be reached from anywhere in the United States. If you are calling from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the number is (202) 366-0123. A Spanish-speaking operator is available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern time. The Hotline is available to the hearing impaired through a teleprinter (TTY) number, (800) 424-9153. In the Washington, D.C. area the TTY number is (202) 366-7800.

If it is determined that a safety defect exists, the manufacturer

has to fix the problem at no cost to the owner.

If there are any documents relevant to your case, including copies of repair bills and letters to the manufacturer, attach them to your completed VOQ.

If you are not sure of any information requested in the VOQ, leave the box blank. But we must have the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to process your questionnaire. The VIN is a 17-digit number that can be seen through the front windshield on the driver's side of the dash-

board. When reporting a tire problem, the DOT identification (located on the sidewall) is needed.

The VOQ asks if you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of your report to the manufacturer. If so, check YES on the VOQ and sign and date it. When we send the report to the manufacturer, it often results in a satisfactory solution of individual problems. But NHTSA cannot *order* corrective action unless the vehicle or item of equipment is determined to have a defect and a safety recall campaign is conducted.

Check out our home page for information on a variety of vehicle safety topics.
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>





U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Auto Safety Hotline

Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

NATIONWIDE 1-800-424-9393
DC METRO AREA (202) 366-0123

FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

Od-or ____
rt-dt ____
od-rt ____
up-ltr ____

Reference No.

OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name _____
Street No. _____ Apt. No. _____
City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Day Time Telephone Number
()

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle? YES NO
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name and address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner _____ Date ____/____/____

VEHICLE INFORMATION

Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN.) <small>(Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side)</small>	Vehicle Make	Vehicle Model	Vehicle Year	Current Odometer Reading

Purchase Date	Dealer's Name _____	Engine Size (CID/CC/L) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Turbo
<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	No. Cylinders _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Diesel
			<input type="checkbox"/> Gas
			<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Injection

Transmission Type	Antilock Brakes	Restraint System	Cruise Control	Drivetrain	Body Style
<input type="checkbox"/> Manual <input type="checkbox"/> Automatic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Driverside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> Passengerside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	<input type="checkbox"/> Hatch Back <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Stawag <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Door
		<input type="checkbox"/> Motorbelt <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt			<input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____

FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Component	Part Name(s)	Location	Failed Part(s)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Left <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	<input type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement
No. of Failures	Date(s) of Failure(s) _____ Mileage at Failure(s) _____ Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) _____	Manufacturer Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

APPLICABLE ACCIDENT INFORMATION

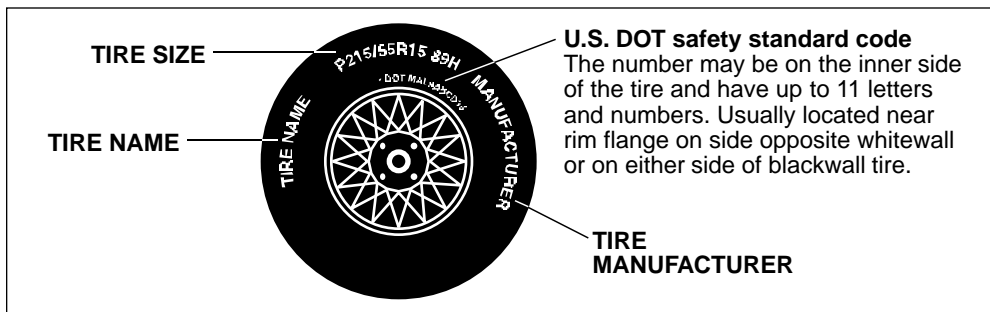
(Use reverse side for more detailed information)

Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Number Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Estimated Property Damage \$ _____	Reported to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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INFORMATION ON TIRE FAILURE(S) (IF APPLICABLE)

To report defective or failed tires provide the following: DOT Number, Tire Manufacturer, Tire Name, Tire Size (include all numbers and letters).
Note: This information not required for normal operation tires.

D	O	T									Manufacturer	Tire Name	Size
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The Privacy Act of 1974—Public Law 93-579 This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

