



# Selecting Car Restraints for Children with a Disability or Medical Condition

**Children who have a disability or medical condition often require special consideration when being transported in a motor vehicle**

This information sheet is designed to assist parents, carers and health professionals to understand the complexities of selecting an appropriate child car restraint for children with a disability or medical condition. It is important to comply with the relevant legislations and current Australian Standards related to transport of children and child car restraints.

National child restraint laws specify that up to the age of seven years, children must be restrained in a child car restraint appropriate for their age and size. More information can be found at:

<http://www.ors.wa.gov.au/Road-Safety-Topics/Road-Issues/Seat-Belts>

## **Use of Child Car Restraints in Australia Australian Standards: AS/NZS 1754:2013**

According to the Australian Competition and Consumer Act 2010 and the WA Road Traffic Code 2000, all child car restraints sold and used in Australia must meet “AS/NZS 1754:2013 Child restraint systems for use in motor vehicles”.

This symbol (to the right) indicates that a restraint is compliant.



It is a legal requirement to use restraints that meet this standard. These are referred to as “compliant” restraints. However, for children who have a disability or medical condition, this is not always possible due to postural, behavioural or medical needs.

## **Australian Standards: AS/NZS 4370:2013**

For children with a disability or medical condition, a separate Australian Standard has been developed - “AS/NZS 4370:2013: Restraint of children with disabilities or medical conditions in a motor vehicle”. This sets out guidelines and procedures to assist a prescriber (eg. Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist) to ensure the safest restraint option is recommended for the child.

It may be that a compliant restraint is appropriate – there are many new models that provide considerable postural support and accommodate children of larger heights and weights.

# A Guide to Selecting Car Restraints

The Independent Living Centre provides an impartial information and advisory service to help you choose the right product for you

## Role of the Prescriber (OT or Physio)

### Step 1. Assess the child's needs

Assessment of the child, parents needs, environment, vehicle etc. There is an assessment guide included in AS/NZS 4370:2013.

### Step 2. Identify the available options

Identify what restraint options are available for the child, using the assessment results and the "prescription order of preference".

### Step 3. Recommend the most suitable option

Prescribers are to complete an "Advice to Parent(s) form" detailing the recommendation.

An example template is included in AS/NZS 4370:2013. This is available for purchase from: <http://infostore.saiglobal.com/store/Details.aspx?ProductID=1624921>

Alternatively, the prescriber can develop their own document/supporting letter outlining: the child/parent/prescriber details, details of the prescribed restraint and why it has been chosen. Parents should keep a copy in their vehicle.



## Prescription Order of Preference

The order in which restraints should be considered / trialled to ensure the safest option is selected is:

1. A compliant child restraint (complies with Australian Standard AS/NZS 1754:2013)
2. A modified compliant child restraint (only basic modifications should be done - the structural integrity of restraint can not be altered. Do not cut or sew the straps)
3. A special purpose child restraint (designed for children with special needs)
4. A modified special purpose child restraint
5. A customised restraint or other option

## Suitable modifications include:

- Additional padding / foam blocks to provide support. Any foam added should be firm, flame retardant, secured and less than 2kg
- Using a soft collar
- Using a foot support, e.g., a foam support or bean bag between the front and rear seat
- Using a harness for postural support in combination with a standard seat belt.
- Increasing the recline or tilt of the seat

# A Guide to Selecting Car Restraints



## Getting Approval from WA Department of Transport

If no compliant restraints are suitable for the child and no basic modifications can be done to make it suitable, then approval will be needed from the WA Department of Transport to use a non-compliant restraint option. Please note: use of non-compliant accessories eg. Some buckle-guards, also need approval.

Contact the ILC or WA Department of Transport for an exemption application form (ph. 9216 3891), complete this and send it back to WA Department of Transport with the "Advice to Parent(s) form" or similar documentation and a copy of a medical certificate / letter outlining the child's medical condition.

## Approval is required:

- For use of any Child Car Restraint that does not meet AS/NZS 1754
- Regardless of length of use
- Regardless of whether it complies with other international standards

Please contact ILC for further information on selecting a child car restraint for children, or advice on specific products. ILC has a selection of restraints available for hire.

## Additional Resources

SAI Global: to purchase a copy of the Australian Standards  
[www.saiglobal.com](http://www.saiglobal.com)

Kidsafe WA: for information on general child car restraint requirements  
[www.kidsafewa.com.au](http://www.kidsafewa.com.au)

WA Department of Transport  
[www.transport.wa.gov.au](http://www.transport.wa.gov.au)

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## Further information:

### ILC Head Office:

The Niche Suite A 11 Aberdare Road Nedlands WA 6009  
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