

Buckle Up

Safety Belts Make a Difference

Safety Belts Save Lives

Using safe driving practices, day and night, is the key to keeping drivers, their passengers and other motorists on our highways safe. **A SEATBELT CAN MEAN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.** Regular seatbelt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. When worn correctly, seatbelts have proven to reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent—and by 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs and minivans.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), seatbelts saved an estimated 15,383 lives in 2006 alone. An additional 5,441 lives could have been saved if seatbelts were worn at the time of the crash. In 2006, 77 percent of passenger vehicle occupants in a fatal crash who were buckled up survived the crash.*

Despite the fact that safety belts are the most effective safety devices in vehicles today, **ONE IN FIVE AMERICANS** (18% nationally) still fail to regularly wear their seatbelts when driving or riding in a motor vehicle according to NHTSA's observational seatbelt studies.

Get the Facts

Many people do not wear safety belts due to long-standing myths and seatbelt folklore. Instead of getting sidetracked by these myths, learn the **REAL FACTS** about seatbelts and don't be deceived by falsehoods.

MYTH: I'm only driving a short distance, so I don't really need to wear my safety belt. I won't be in a crash.

FACT: Most of our driving trips are short distances. Research shows that 95% of our travel is close to home. With so much travel close to home, it is more likely that we'll be involved in a crash that occurs within 30 miles or less of our home.



"We are in the midst of a national epidemic. If this many people were to die from any one disease in a single year, Americans would demand a vaccine. The irony is we already have the best vaccine available to reduce the death toll on our highways—safety belts."

*Former Transportation Secretary
Norman Mineta, April 2005*

MYTH: It is better to be thrown out of your vehicle if you have a collision.

FACT: If we don't wear our safety belts, and are thrown out of our vehicle, our chances of being seriously injured increase 25 times and our chance of being fatally injured increases six times.

MYTH: The safety belt will trap me in a burning or submerged vehicle.

FACT: Less than one-half of one percent of injury-producing collisions involves fire or submersion. If you don't wear your safety belts, you have a very good chance of being knocked unconscious and not responding.

MYTH: I don't need to wear a safety belt. The air bag alone will protect me in a crash.

FACT: Air bags are designed to work with lap and shoulder belts. They do not provide protection to unbelted vehicle occupants.

Safety belts are your cheapest form of insurance and personal protection. Wearing your safety belt costs you nothing, but not wearing it certainly will. And remember... in most states, including Pennsylvania, it is the law.

This information was adapted from public promotional materials from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: www.nhtsa.gov/buckleup, May 1, 2008. For more information on home safety and injury prevention, log onto your Member Web site at www.highmark.com and select your service region. Click on "Health Topics" to search the Healthwise® Knowledgebase.

**Source of Statistics: NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts, 2006, U.S. Department of Transportation and Uniform Crime Report, 2006, U.S. Department of Justice*



Click It Every Day

- Be a role model for others, and always buckle up 100% of the time.
- Remind everyone in the vehicle—of all ages—to always buckle up before getting on the road. No exceptions, no excuses.
- Always use both the lap belt and shoulder harness. Do not slip your arm through the shoulder harness for "more comfort." Instead, adjust the position of the seat. Newer safety restraints are designed to allow movement.
- Make sure the shoulder harness is snug against your chest and the lap belt is low and tight across the hips. A few wrinkles in your clothing are worth the extra protection of wearing your safety belt.
- Make sure children ride in the back seat and are properly restrained. Follow the car manufacturer's instructions regarding airbags and front passenger seat weight guidelines.