



The Dangers of Second-hand Child Restraints

You may think you are getting a bargain, but it is not worth the risk.

There are many bargains to be found at area thrift shops, yard sales and other similar venues. Unfortunately, there is one item in particular that you should avoid...a used child safety seat. Although a used safety seat might be a tempting purchase due to reduced cost, the possibility of risking your child's life is not worth the money saved.

Child safety seats purchased at yard sales, consignment or thrift shops have no information about the history of the safety seat (i.e., crash history or storage conditions). The safety seat may have hidden damage. If the safety seat has been involved in a crash, it has done its job and must be replaced.

This is also the case for safety seats loaned from friends and family members. If you must use a second-hand safety seat, there are several guidelines on what to look for when assessing the suitability of a used child safety seat:

- Determine if the safety seat in question has been the subject of a recall or, if recalled, that the necessary repair work has been completed correctly. Most child restraint manufacturers supply a sticker to indicate that the seat has been repaired.
- All child safety seats should have a current FMVSS 213 compliance label; if not present do not use the safety seat.

- All child safety seats should be no more than six years old. A seat older than 5–6 years old has potentially had too much wear and tear to be considered acceptable. Child safety seats made within the past few years are generally more user-friendly and therefore more likely to be used consistently and correctly. Child restraints manufactured before 9/1/99 may not be able to accept a top tether.
- Determine if the manufacturer is still in business and if the instruction booklet is available.
- Inspect the structural integrity (no hairline marks in plastic, cracks, loose rivets, etc.).
- All parts are present and in good condition, including harness straps, retainer clips, padding, tether straps and bolts.
- No evidence of crash involvement. If a child safety seat is involved in a crash it must be replaced. If not 100% sure, the safety seat should not be used. Even in minor collisions, the child safety seat may have cracks or other structural damage that you can't see. If in doubt, consult the child restraint instructions for replacement guidelines and contact the manufacturer for advice.

