

BUCKLE UP

Protect Yourself With Seat Belts

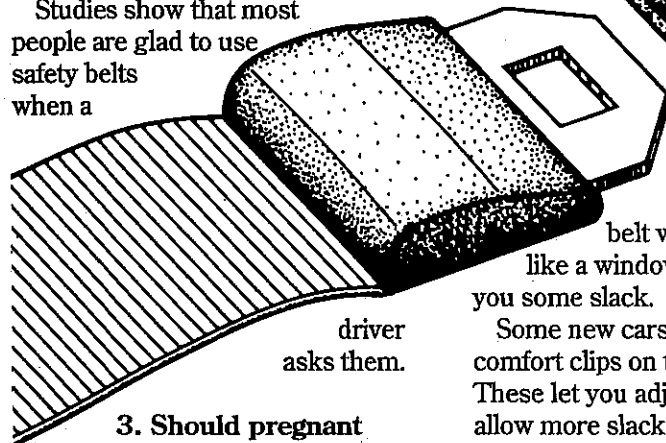
When you get in your car, do you buckle up? If not, is it because you've been led astray by common misinformation about seat belts? Here are the answers to some of the questions that people most often ask about seat belts:

1. What difference will a seat belt make in a serious crash?

It could spell the difference between life and death. Your chances of surviving a serious crash are three to four times greater if you're wearing a lap and shoulder belt, regardless of speed.

2. Won't people be offended if I ask them to wear seat belts?

Studies show that most people are glad to use safety belts when a



driver asks them.

3. Should pregnant women wear safety belts?

Yes. An expectant mother should always wear a safety belt low on her abdomen below the unborn child.

4. Why should I wear a seat belt on short trips at low speeds?

That's when most crashes happen. Eighty percent of deaths and injuries happen at speeds under 40 miles per hour. Seventy-five percent of deaths and injuries occur

less than 25 miles from home.

5. Since my shoulder strap lets me lean forward, how can it hold me in place during an accident?

Shoulder belts are designed to lock if your car makes a sudden stop or crashes.

6. My shoulder strap hits me at an uncomfortable spot. How can I make it more comfortable?

In many cars, all you need to do is pull the belt off your shoulder just enough to

relieve the pressure. The belt will catch (much like a window shade) and give you some slack.

Some new cars have plastic comfort clips on the shoulder belts. These let you adjust the belt to allow more slack, yet the clip doesn't keep your belt from working in a crash. Your dealer may have clips that can be installed in your car.

Avoid putting a shoulder belt under your arm or behind you in an attempt to make it more comfortable. This greatly reduces its effectiveness and could cause injury.

7. What if my belt's too small to fit around me?

There are devices called belt extenders that give you extra length. Most auto dealers offer them free of charge even if you didn't purchase your car from that dealer.

8. What if the belts are missing when I buy a used car?

Have a dealer install belts rather than attempting to do it yourself. That way you know your belt system will work properly. If you can't find a dealer who will install the belts, contact the car's manufacturer.

9. Will a seat belt protect my child?

Yes, if your youngster's too big or too old to ride in a safety seat. The general rule is that a child outgrows the safety seat when he or she reaches 4 years or weighs 40 pounds. Then, you should see to it that your youngster buckles up (or gets buckled up) every time he's in the car. Place the shoulder belt behind the child's back if it covers his neck or face when fastened normally. For small youngsters, safety seats provide more protection than seat belts.

Make It A Habit

Now that you know the facts, start buckling up. If you make it a habit to do it every time, you won't even think about it. And you can drive with the peace of mind that your chances of avoiding death or serious injury are far greater every time you get in the car.

