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Québec 

Some Facts...

When used properly, a seat belt, headrest and airbag can save your life.

Each year in Québec, over 35,000 traffic accidents cause bodily injury, almost 100 accidents a day. Road crashes cause approximately 50,000 accident victims, who sustain severe or minor injuries, and claim an estimated 600 lives.

- Seat belts reduce the risk of death and severe injury in a crash by half.
- When combined, a seat belt and airbag reduce the risk of severe head injury in a crash by 75%.
- When an automobile strikes an obstacle at a speed of 50 km/h, the force it exerts on an object that is in motion multiplies the weight of the object by 35 times. In other words, an individual who weighs 70 kg becomes a 2,450 kg projectile that can collide with the steering wheel, windshield, dashboard or another passenger!
- At 50 km/h, the impact of a crash is equivalent to an automobile falling from a four storey building! At 90 km/h, the impact is identical to a fall from a ten storey building!
- In rear-end, side-on or head-on collisions, a properly adjusted headrest reduces the risk of a cervical sprain by over 25%.



A Seat Belt Holds You in Place!

Today, nine out of ten Quebecers automatically buckle up when they get into a vehicle. That figure is too low given that an estimated 30% of deceased drivers involved in accidents in recent years were not wearing a seat belt.

Some people have the misguided belief that if they are driving slowly or only a short distance, they are not at risk. This is false! More than half of all accidents occur near the home and in zones where the speed limit is 50 km/h or less.

By what logic can we, even today, ride in a vehicle without buckling up when the facts are clear that a seat belt is a proven safeguard and that under the law we have to buckle up?

It is also misguided to believe that in a crash, a passenger who is sitting in the back seat is protected by the front seat. In a collision, the vehicle's occupants can be projected in all directions, depending on the point of impact.

According to another myth popular among pregnant women, in a collision or sudden stop, a seat belt can crush the fetus, cause the uterus to rupture or lead to a detached placenta. The truth is that women who do not wear a seat belt expose their child to greater risk.

It has been proven that in almost all road accidents involving an expectant mother, it was the death of the mother that caused the death of a fetus, not pressure exerted by a seat belt. To protect a fetus in a crash, you have to protect the life of the mother.

This is why the *Highway Safety Code* requires expectant mothers to wear a seat belt and why the Association des obstétriciens et gynécologues du Québec recommends that they always buckle up. For maximum protection of a mother and unborn child, a seat belt has to be properly adjusted:

- the lap belt should be worn across the pelvic bones, not over the abdomen;
- the shoulder strap should rest against the collar bone, not the neck;
- seat belts should be tightened and have no slack.

An expectant mother should consult a physician if she has been involved in a collision, even a minor one.

Do you have to wear a seat belt if you're riding in a taxi?

Obviously, the effectiveness of a seat belt does not change when you get into a taxi. Surprisingly, however, some passengers appear to forget to buckle up. It is important to know that:

- in a taxicab, children are required to wear a seat belt, unless they are too young to maintain an upright position. An individual who accompanies a child must take all the necessary precautions because an offence will result in a \$80 to \$100 fine and 3 demerit points.
- individuals aged 16 and over who ride in a taxicab are required to wear a seat belt and must assume the penalties that apply if they fail to wear one.
- a taxi driver is required to wear a seat belt when travelling on a numbered public road, particularly a highway. On other roads and in the exercise of his or her duty, a taxi driver is exempt from this requirement.

Important: firmly secure all movable objects inside an automobile because an object that has not been secured in the passenger compartment could become a projectile that can collide with and strike occupants.

If an animal is transported in a vehicle, it must not obstruct the view of the driver or interfere with vehicle operation. Remember that an animal that has not been properly restrained can become a projectile in a collision and could injure or even kill the occupants of a vehicle. Transport cages are a safe solution.

A Headrest Protects the Head!

Warning: this device was designed for more than reclining and resting your head...

Each year thousands of Quebecers sustain a cervical sprain in an automobile accident. The best way to prevent this type of injury is to properly adjust the headrest. To ensure maximum protection:

- there should be no more than 10 cm between a person's head and the headrest;
- the centre of the headrest should be level with the eyes or top of the ears.

Adjusting your headrest properly can prevent a real “pain in the neck.”

Airbags

Cushion the Impact!

Airbags work best in combination with a seat belt, especially in high-speed collisions.

It is worth noting that injuries that can result from deployment of an airbag are generally minor, usually little more than abrasions or bruises, but are nothing compared to the serious injuries airbags can prevent!

Injury risks can be reduced if a distance of 25 cm is maintained between the airbag cover and the sternum. Simply adjust your normal driving position by:

- moving your seat back while still maintaining easy access to the car's pedals;
- slightly tilting your seat back;
- elevating your seat, if your car is equipped with this feature, or use a non-slip cushion if the new driving position reduces your field of vision.

Children

Children under age 12 should sit in the back seat of a vehicle, whether or not it has a front passenger-side airbag. A child sitting in the back seat has a 25% less risk of being injured in a crash than a child sitting in the front seat.

Before a child uses only a seat belt, check for the following:

- 1.** If a child is sitting on the back seat, his or her back should rest against the back of the seat and the knees should be bent at the front edge of the seat. The child should be able to remain in this position comfortably for the entire trip.
- 2.** When a seat belt is buckled, the strap should come over the middle of the shoulder (over the collar bone) and across the hips. It should not rest on the neck or stomach.

If these conditions cannot be respected, the child should continue to use a booster seat, even if he or she has reached a sitting height of 63 cm.

Caution concerning newborns:
never place an infant carrier on the front seat of a vehicle if it has a passenger-side airbag. For more information about child safety seats, read the pamphlet entitled Secure Them for Life, available at the SAAQ.



For more information about your vehicle's restraint devices, contact the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ):

Québec (city and vicinity): 418 643-7620

Montréal: 514 873-7620

Elsewhere: 1 800 361-7620, toll free (Québec, Canada, U.S.A.)

Web site: www.saaq.gouv.qc.ca

**Société de l'assurance
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