

Purchasing the right car seat

Unfortunately, fake car seats have been on the market for a while. With many families facing financial worries due to the recent COVID-19 health crisis, it may be even more tempting to save money by buying a product that is advertised as a car seat and priced at a very low cost.

When used correctly, car seats are extremely protective and can prevent injury and fatalities but car seats that do not meet U.S. safety standards will not protect a child in a crash. Parents and caregivers need to be aware of what to look for in order to avoid buying one of these dangerous imposters.

In the U.S., car seats are regulated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The manufacturers must give their car seats rigorous tests to show that they are meeting the NHTSA standards. In addition to crash tests, the safety standards include the fabric being used, which must not contain any harmful chemicals as well as pass a flammability test.

Tips to avoid buying a fake car seat:

-Buy in person. The best way to ensure that you are getting the car seat you intended is to go in-person. This may not be the most convenient option, but it will ensure that you are getting a seat that has been manufactured by a legitimate car seat manufacturer.

-If buying online, ask the following questions: Does the manufacturer have a website that you can find easily? Is the car seat on the American Academy of Pediatrics' list? It lists only

seats that meet federal motor vehicle safety standards and are approved for use in the U.S. Find the list at: <https://healthychildren.org>, and then type 'Car seat list' in the search box.

Does the deal seem too good to be true? If so, there is a good chance that you are looking at a knockoff or fake seat. Is it being sold directly by a trusted retailer? With other online sites, such as Amazon or Walmart, make sure the seller is not a third-party and that the seats are being sold directly by the manufacturer or the site itself. Check the car seats you already own to make sure they are legitimate NHTSA approved car seats. Does it have a label stating, "The child restraint system conforms to all applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards?" Is the brand stamped on the seat itself? Most knockoffs do not use the genuine brand name —some do not include any brand at all. Did it come with clear instructions? Is there a model number, customer-service number and manufacture date printed on it? Did it come with a registration card to send back to the manufacturer? All car seats sold in the U.S. are required to come with one so the manufacturer can contact you in case of a recall. Are there clear labels on the seat that indicate its use and correct installation?



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It may also be tempting to save some money during these hard times by buying a used car seat. Sometimes a used or second-hand car seat may be safe to use. The following are ways to determine if the seat is safe to use.

-Do you know the history of the seat? If not, the seat is not safe to use.

-Has it ever been in a crash?

-Does it have all its parts and is it in good condition?

-Has it expired? Check for an expiration date on the back of the seat. It is usually stamped into the plastic. You can also call the manufacturer to check for the expiration date.

-Is the seat on recall? If you have the manufacturer name, model name and number, as well as the date of manufacture, you can check for recalls at: www.nhtsa.gov/parents-and-caregivers. Then, go to Car Seats and Boosters Seats and then Recalls.

You do not have to buy the most expensive car seat to protect your child. There are many inexpensive models that meet all of the U.S. safety standards. The safest car seat is the one that is used correctly and fits the child and fits the vehicle properly.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Rusk County, reminds parents to be sure that your child is riding in the right seat, going in the right direction, harnessed properly and installed correctly.

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