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Some facts...

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

Every year in Québec, traffic accidents cause more than 40,000 injuries and claim an estimated 500 lives.

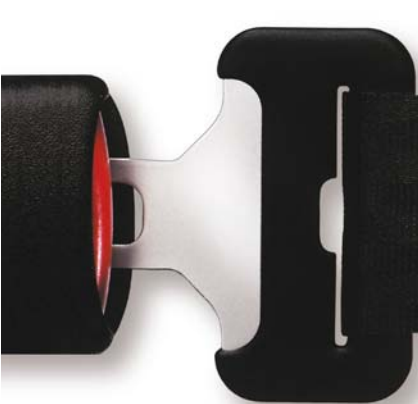
Seatbelts reduce the risk of death and severe injury in a crash by half. How? Seatbelts hold you in place in the event of an accident.

When combined, a seat belt and airbag reduce the risk of severe head injury in a crash by 75%.

In rear-end, side-on or head-on collisions, a properly adjusted headrest reduces the risk of a neck sprain by over 25%.

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!



Seat belts **hold 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.

The law

You are required to buckle up in a vehicle. If you do not, you are liable to a fine of \$115 to \$154 and three demerit points.

Starting at age 16, passengers who do not wear seat belts can receive fines and demerit points.

In taxis

In a taxi, children are required to wear a seat belt, unless they are too young to maintain an upright position. If an offence is committed, the person who accompanies the child is liable to a fine.

Taxi drivers are required to wear a seat belt when travelling on a numbered public road, i.e. a highway. On other roads and in the exercise of their duty, taxi drivers are exempt from this requirement.

Enough myths and poor excuses!

“I’m not going far, and I’m not going fast.” It’s still risky! More than half of road accidents occur close to home and in zones where the speed limit is 50 km/h or less.

“I’m sitting in the back so there’s no risk.” Don’t get too comfortable - the front seat won’t protect you. In the event of an accident, people in the vehicle can be thrown in any direction, depending on the point of impact: backwards, forwards or sideways.

Are you pregnant?

According to another myth, 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 reality is that to properly protect the fetus, you need to protect the life of the woman carrying it. It has been proven that in almost all road accidents involving a pregnant mother, it was the death of the mother that caused the death of a fetus, not pressure exerted by a seat belt. 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 taut.

Pregnant women should consult a physician if they have been involved in a collision, even a minor one.

Watch out for flying objects!

Firmly secure all movable objects inside an automobile because an object that has not been secured in the passenger compartment could become a projectile during a collision 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.

Headrests protect your 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 only 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.

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. You may have to 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.

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 letting a child use only a seat belt, check for the following:

1. The child should have a sitting height of 63 cm (from the buttocks to the crown of the head).
2. When 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.
3. 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 children should continue to use a booster seat, even if they have 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, visit www.childcarseat.qc.ca



For more information about seat belts, air bags, headrests and child safety seats, 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

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