

# **Should I Use a Seat Belt?**

## **Should I wear a seat belt while I'm pregnant?**

Yes, you should always wear a seat belt. Wearing your seat belt protects you and your baby from injury or death in a car crash. You should wear a seat belt no matter where you sit in the car.

## **How should I wear my seat belt?**

The seat belt should be a 3-point restraint. That means it should have a lap strap and a shoulder strap. Lap and shoulder belts keep you from being thrown from the car during an accident. The shoulder strap also keeps the pressure of your body off of the baby after a crash.

Be sure to wear your seat belt correctly. The lap strap should go under your belly, across your hips and as high as possible on your thighs. The shoulder strap should go between your breasts and off to the side of your belly. Seat belt straps should never go directly across your stomach. The seat belt should fit snugly. If possible, adjust the height of the shoulder strap so that it fits you correctly.

## **What about air bags?**

Most experts agree that air bags are safe and can protect pregnant women from head injury. The air bags in your car should not be turned off when you are pregnant. To be safe, you should move the seat back as far as possible and tilt the seat to get some distance between your belly and the steering wheel or dashboard. Air bags are not a substitute for a seat belt, so always wear your seat belt even if your car has air bags.

## **Where should I sit if I'm a passenger?**

Where a mother sits has not been shown to affect the safety of an unborn baby in a crash. However, if you are not driving, you should sit in the back seat. Injuries from car crashes tend to be less serious in people who are sitting in the back seat. It is still important to wear a seat belt.

## **What should I do if I am in a car crash?**

You should get treatment right away, even if you think you are not hurt. Most injuries to the baby happen within a few hours after a crash. Your midwife or doctor needs to check you and your baby as soon as possible after a crash, especially if you are more than 6 months pregnant.

## **What danger signs should I watch for after a car crash?**

Call your midwife or doctor right away if you have pain in your belly, blood or fluid leaking from your vagina, or contractions.

**Source:** [Blunt Trauma in Pregnancy \(American Family Physician October 1, 2004  
http://www.aafp.org/afp/20041001/1303.html\)](http://www.aafp.org/afp/20041001/1303.html)