

Child safety seats and lap-and-shoulder belts effective in preventing serious injury

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For young children, all states currently require the use of child safety seats, and the minimum age and weight requirements to graduate to seat belts has been increasing over time. A new study in the journal *Economic Inquiry* reveals that lap-and-shoulder seat belts perform as well as child safety seats in preventing serious injury. However, safety seats tend to be better at reducing less serious injuries.

Steven D. Levitt of the University of Chicago and author of the book *Freakonomics* and Joseph J. Doyle of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology analyzed three large representative samples of crashes reported to the police, as well as linked hospital data, among motor vehicle passengers aged 2-6 years of age. Researchers used the data to compare seat belts and child safety seats in preventing injury.

Results show that lap-and-shoulder seat belts perform as well as child safety seats in preventing serious injury. Safety seats were associated with a statistically significant 25 percent reduction in less serious injuries. Lap belts are somewhat less effective than the other two types of restraints, but far superior to riding unrestrained.

Source: Wiley

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