

### **Seat Belt Myths ...and Other Excuses**

**MYTH: I don't wear safety belts anymore, now that I have a car equipped with air bags.**

**FACT:** Air bags are designed to work TOGETHER with your safety belt to keep you in position in the event of a crash. To work effectively, an air bag comes out of the dashboard at a rate of 200 miles per hour. If you are not properly belted, the airbag could kill you.

Air bags provide supplemental protection in frontal crashes, but motorists can slide under them if they are not wearing a seat belt. In addition, air bags will not help in a side or rear impact or rollover crash. Motorists should wear a seat belt for protection in all types of crashes.

**MYTH: I buckle up most of the time, but not if I am just going to the corner store a few blocks from my house.**

**FACT:** The risk of getting into a serious crash is just as great when you need to take a quick trip to the store as it is on a longer trip. We know that 75 percent of all serious motor vehicle crashes occur within 25 miles of a person's home and 80 percent of deaths and serious injuries occur in cars that are traveling under 40 miles per hour. Being thrown against a dashboard in a 30 mile-per-hour crash is like striking the ground after falling from a third-floor window. Even a crash at only 12 miles per hour can be fatal.

**MYTH: I don't wear safety belts because I feel that I would be trapped if the car caught fire or if I were to drive into a body of water and become submerged.**

**FACT:** Less than one-half of one percent of crashes involve fire or submersion. Using safety belts prevents occupants from being knocked unconscious or into other passengers so that you can actually get out of the vehicle with the least amount of injury. Without a seat belt you are likely to be knocked out or too severely injured to leave the vehicle.

**MYTH: Wearing a safety belt wrinkles my clothes.**

**FACT:** *Are you kidding?* In comparison to severe injuries or even death, isn't it worth adjusting to the temporary discomfort of a safety belt? Wrinkles can be removed. The emotional pain and physical suffering that accompanies a serious crash cannot be as easily ironed out.

**MYTH: I want to be thrown clear of my car to get out of harms way in the event of a crash.**

**FACT:** Your chances of being killed are four times greater if you are thrown out of the vehicle. If you get thrown from the vehicle, you're more likely to be killed by the trip through the windshield, or by the collision you'll make with the ground 150 feet later, than by the initial collision with another vehicle or any other object. It is also true that it is not uncommon for occupants to be crushed by the rolling vehicle *after* they are ejected. The best way to avoid harm is to stay within the vehicle's safety cage.

**MYTH: Seat belts are too uncomfortable.**

**FACT:** In a car crash--without your seat belt—you would smash into the steering column, slam into the dashboard or crash through the windshield—this is probably uncomfortable too. Newer shoulder belts are made so that you can move comfortably but they will still lock up in sudden stops or crashes. You should also familiarize yourself with the adjustment of the shoulder restraint so that it fits you properly and comfortably.

**MYTH: We'll never have a crash—My mom/dad is a good driver. I'm a good driver.**

**FACT:** Unfortunately, good drivers can be hit by bad drivers, intoxicated drivers, aggressive drivers or inattentive drivers. Few people intend to have crashes. A seat belt helps you be ready for the unexpected—such as sudden collisions with wildlife.

**MYTH: An adult's arms provide the best protection for a very small baby.**

**FACT:** In a 30 m.p.h. crash, a 10 pound baby can suddenly be ripped from a belted adult's arms with a force of over 300 pounds and launched into the dashboard. No matter how strong you are you cannot hold on to a baby in a crash.

**MYTH: I knew someone who died in a car accident, because they were wearing their seat belt.**

FACT: If a person was killed in a car accident, it was not because they wore their seat belt, it was in spite of wearing their seat belt. The accident was most likely so severe and devastating, that only not being in that car at that moment would have prevented that fatality.