[IMAGE]

An Important Safety Check: Are Your Seat Belts Safe?

By David Kent, LMT, NCTMB

Since opening my clinic in 1992, I have treated numerous individuals with soft-tissue traumas resulting from a motor vehicle accident (MVA). According to the Centers for Disease (CDC), approximately 6,400 adults are injured daily in a crash.

While seat belts reduce serious crash-related injuries and death by 50 percent, when improperly worn, they also cause trauma. Here are some important seat belt safety tips to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Newton's First Law of Motion, sometimes referred to as the law of inertia, basically states: an object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion, at a constant speed and direction, unless acted upon by an outside force. When you are seated in a motor vehicle traveling 35 miles per hour and it suddenly stops, inertia continues to move your body forward. Only a thin strip of fabric, the seat belt, holds your body in place. It prevents you from flying forward, at a speed of 35 miles per hour that converts to 51.34 feet per second, smashing into the dashboard and windshield. A crash happens in a fraction of a second.

seat belt safety - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark For seat belts to perform, the seat and person must be in the correct position. The seat back should be upright. You should sit on your ischial tuberosities with the hips, back and shoulders against the seat back.

Before buckling the seat belt, confirm the material is flat and not twisted like a rope that could potentially cut into the body. The lap portion of the seatbelt should be positioned across the pelvis, just below the anterior superior iliac spine (ASIS) (**See Photo 1**). Often, the lap belt is placed too high across the abdomen. In this position, during a collision, the lap belt will cut deep into the abdomen, causing trauma to the rectus abdominis, abdominal oblique muscles and internal organs (**See Photo 2**).

seat belt safety - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The shoulder belt should be positioned across the rib cage, sternum and midpoint of the clavicle (**See Photo 1**). Never place the shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back. Internal organs are less likely to be injured when seat belts are positioned correctly (**See Photo 3**).

seat belt safety - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Remove any slack between the seat belt and the body to reduce the potential for movement during an accident. If adjustable, position the head restraint or "headrest" to minimize movement of the head during a collision (**See Photo 3**). Often, the headrest is too low, causing the neck to hyperextend and resulting in additional trauma.

There is a big difference between knowing what to do and doing what you know. Protect yourself, family and friends by applying and sharing seat belt safety protocols.

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