



Second Hand Car Seats... Are They Worth It?

All too often I drive down the street and notice a car seat with a “Free” sign on it sitting on the side of the street. I run across ads stating the sale of a car seat, or see them at a discounted price at the thrift store or a garage sale. Although it appears like a nice gesture to give away what seems to be a perfectly good car seat, as a Child Passenger Safety Technician, I can tell you that car seats are one product you shouldn’t reuse...especially if you don’t know its history.

What may look like a bargain could end up costing your child’s life. Used car seats can come with a plethora of potential hazards. Has the seat been involved in an accident? Even minor accidents can cause unseen damage to a seat. A used seat could be missing parts, and probably will not come with the manufacturer’s instructions. The used seat may have been recalled or may not meet current safety standards. Furthermore, exposure to summer heat and winter cold can break the plastic down and make it brittle.

In the case that you must get a secondhand car seat, use the following checklist when searching for one. If you can check off all the boxes, it **may be** safe to use.

- The seat has never been involved in a vehicle crash.
- The seat has labels stating date of manufacture and model number. This information is pertinent to find out if there is a recall on the car seat or if the seat is too old.
- The seat has no recalls. If you do find a recall on the car seat, you should contact the manufacturer as some problems can be fixed.
- The seat has all its parts in good, working condition. If the seat is missing a part, contact the manufacturer as some parts can be ordered.
- The seat has its instruction book. You can also order the instruction manual from the manufacturer, or search online for through the manufacturer’s website.

For more information about car seat safety, visit www.SafeKids.org or got to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration website www.NHTSA.gov .

Be sure to have your car seat checked by a child passenger safety technician. You can set an appointment up by contacting:

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