



Baby capsules are the best option for newborn babies, particularly those who arrive early and have a low birthweight (LBW).

Multiple-birth babies and those resulting from complicated pregnancies tend to be small and are better suited to an infant capsule rather than a convertible 0-4 car seat.

The best fit

Baby capsules are designed specifically for the first months of a baby's life and feature a narrower shell and harness fit, plus a lower harness slot height than convertible safety seats. This means the baby is held more securely.

According to a 2016 Australian study*, LBW babies are three times more likely to get a poor harness fit than average birthweight babies in a child restraint not suited

to LBW infants. Eighty-four per cent of LBW babies get a good harness fit in capsules tested and certified for this category.

Many capsules have angle adjusters, allowing the baby to lie at a more suitable angle than in larger convertible restraints.

A correct harness fit and restraint angle are vital for maximising crash protection for newborn babies.

Although child restraints feature an upper size limit for children, they don't specify a lower limit, so it's important you choose a child restraint that's suitable for the baby's size.

What to look for

Be sure the capsule you buy has:

- a firm harness fit with straps sitting on baby's shoulders
- a firm harness fit around the hips and the buckle sitting at hip height
- a good angle when fitted to the vehicle, ensuring baby's head does not flop forward.

Bad fit



- ✗ Head supported but is being pushed slightly forward
- ✗ Harness on lowest slot are too high—causing poor harness fit around shoulders
- ✗ Buckle very high up causing poor harness fit around hips

Good fit



- ✓ Head supported well by padding without pushing head forward
- ✓ Harness sitting on middle of shoulder providing good harness fit
- ✓ Buckle low down providing good harness fit across hips

The only child restraints currently tested and certified to carry LBW babies are the Britax Unity (ISOFIX) and the Maxi Cosi Mico 12. Whereas other restraints rated for newborns are only crash tested with a test dummy weighing 3-4kg (unless otherwise stated), these two capsules are also tested with a LBW test dummy. Both units allow the user to:

- lower the harness more than all other child restraints on the market
- move the harness closer to the midline of the body at both the shoulder and the hips
- move the crotch buckle closer to the child, ensuring a firmer fit over a small baby's body
- use the inserts provided to help centre the child into the harness and provide lateral support.

These capsules can be used for about 12 months and are suitable for all babies, including those born within the normal birthweight range.

The law and the standard

Baby capsules can only be used rearward facing. They mustn't be used in the front seat of a vehicle with two or more rows, or in front of an airbag in a vehicle with only a single row of seats.

All capsules feature a five-point harness and have clear markers indicating when a child should move onto the next child restraint.



Britax Unity (ISOFIX)



Maxi Cosi Mico 12

* *Quality of harness fit for normal and low birthweight infants observed among newborns and infant car seats*, Julie Brown, John Kam Hung Sinn, Aileen Chua, and Elizabeth Clare Clarke. Published by Neuroscience Research Australia, 15 July 2016.

We're here to help

Call the Child Safety Centre on 8202 4592, email childrestraints@raa.com.au or visit our website at raa.com.au/roadsafety