

Mobility Information Sheet 10.

Travelling on Cushions in Vehicles

Many people need to sit on cushions when travelling in a vehicle, either as a driver or passenger, or sometimes when travelling in their wheelchair in a van, minibus or in a coach. Some people use their wheelchair cushion to 'lift' them when driving. Others use them for comfort or to relieve pressure sores.

An important aspect of using a cushion, and one that is often forgotten, is securing the cushion to the wheelchair or vehicle seat. If, during a frontal impact accident, the passenger is secured and the cushion is not, the cushion can slide under the user and force the user to be 'dropped' down into the chair and cause injury from the seat belt hitting the soft abdominal tissue and across the user's face or neck. In some tests using an air cushion without a cover the seat belt was broken causing obvious problems and injuries.

It may be possible to improve seating comfort by raising the seat or tilting the seat, at little cost.

Securing the cushion is important and it must be secured appropriately. Using a Velcro belt is not usually enough. A strap that is secured around the back of the seat is best and it should be able to withstand a load of at least 1.25kilos Newtons, (280lbs).

A better alternative can sometimes be found if a driver or passenger of small stature uses a child's booster cushion, and this should be correctly anchored using the vehicle seat belt system. You should ensure the cushion has a kite mark to BSI Standard BS AU 185:1983.

References: Transport Research Laboratory, Leaflet No. LF 1020
British Standards Institute. Seat belt booster cushions
BS AU 185:1983, London 1983

(We are grateful to the UK Department of Transport for allowing us to reprint this information.)

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