

Car Seat Shopping? Beware of Counterfeit Car Seats

There's a growing threat of counterfeit ("fake") car seats being sold online through major retailers. While these fake car seats resemble authentic and federally approved car seats in appearance, they do not meet the United States federal crash safety standards due to lacking important features that protect children. Because they don't meet these safety standards, no one knows what's going to happen with these fake car seats during a crash.

How can you avoid purchasing a counterfeit car seat?

Do your car seat homework. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) consumer website, healthychildren.org, provides valuable resources and information about car seats, including a list of all federally approved car seats on the market that meet federal safety standards. If you don't see the make and model of a car seat on this list, odds are it's a counterfeit.

Buy your car seat in person, if possible. It is better to purchase a car seat directly from an in-person retail store, instead of online. Not only are you able to see the car seat in person but going to a retail store helps ensure the product you are buying was purchased directly from the manufacturer.

If shopping online, check out the seat before checking out. If you have a car seat in your online shopping cart, do not proceed to checkout until you research the car seat, the manufacturer and read other customers' reviews. It is a clear indicator that the car seat is a counterfeit if there is no information about the car seat or the only information you are able to find is on a foreign website.

Tips for selecting an approved car seat



Look for the labels. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) requires permanent, visible labels on the sides of the car seat that say the car seat is certified to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards or FMVSS 213. In addition to well-written English labels, the car seat should also include the following labels:

- Instructions for installation and use.
- Child height and weight limits.
- Airbag warning label for rear-facing car seats.
- Manufacturer name, model name, number and the date of manufacture (this label may be found on the back of the car seat).

Counterfeit car seats are often missing vital warning and safety labels or do not have any labels at all. They may feature labels with improper English with grammatical errors and/or misspelled words, or a foreign language other than Spanish.



Registration Card

All federally approved car seats have a registration card to fill out so if the car seat is recalled, the manufacturer knows how to contact the owner to replace the seat or send them a repair kit. Counterfeit car seats do not have a registration card.



Instructional Manual

Every federally approved car seat must have an instruction manual that's usually written in English and Spanish.

Counterfeit car seats will either be missing one, or in place of an instruction manual, offer a very basic flyer explaining how to use the car seat. It is often written in improper English with grammatical errors and/or misspelled words, or a foreign language other than Spanish.



Harness and Retainer Clip

All safety approved car seats have a harness system that helps to keep the child secure during a crash. These harnesses provide upper torso restraint from belts over each shoulder and lower torso restraint from a lap and crotch belt. These harnesses must be 1.5 inches or wider and adjustable to snugly fit all children in the weight range for the car seat.

Counterfeit car seats may have narrow, long harness straps that make it difficult to get the retainer clip at armpit level.

How can you be sure you have a federally approved car seat?

Attend an in-person car seat check before your baby arrives so a counterfeit car seat does not interfere with a safe ride home. Visit LVHN.org/raisingafamily for more information and to register for a car seat check event.

If you suspect a car seat might be counterfeit or a knockoff:

- ✓ Keep a receipt and record of where, when and how the seat was purchased.
- ✓ Contact the manufacturer to verify the product's information (Example: model/serial number, etc.).
- ✓ If the seat is counterfeit, report it to STOPfakes.gov through their email: stopfakes@trade.gov

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Resources: PA TIPP (Pennsylvania Traffic Injury Prevention Project, funded by PennDOT through the Pennsylvania Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics).

