

# MECHANICAL RESTRAINT

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Mechanical Restraint is a restrictive practice defined in a law called the Senior Practitioner Act 2018. This law applies to providers.

Mechanical Restraints are devices that stop the person moving and using behaviours of concern. Behaviours of concern are behaviours that hurt the person or any other person.

If the person has a device to stop them taking their seat belt off or they need a device to help them stay healthy or do activities, that is not a mechanical restraint.

**If the device is prescribed by an occupational therapist (OT) or a doctor, is it a mechanical restraint?**

It can be. Mechanical restraint is determined by the purpose, not by who prescribes it.

If the device is to control or subdue movement in response to a behaviour of concern it is a mechanical restraint.

**I need to keep the person's seat belt on – is the buckleguard a mechanical restraint?**

No. the use of a buckleguard or harness to ensure that someone keeps their seatbelt on is not a mechanical restraint.

However, if you are using the buckleguard and/or harness to keep a person in their seat because they are engaging in a behaviour of concern, for example hitting the driver or other passengers, then it needs to be reported as a mechanical restraint.

**How do I know if a device that is used for therapeutic purposes or if it is mechanical restraint?**

Therapeutic devices are based on an assessment by a clinician (such as an OT, physiotherapist or orthopaedic clinician) and have a detailed plan describing the how the device will help and what the goals of the plan are. If you don't have a copy of this plan, you should ask for it immediately.

For example, an OT may prescribe a cast or splint to help immobilise a child's arm to help the arm to heal. This is a therapeutic purpose. The same OT may also prescribe a splint to immobilise a child's arm in response to self-injurious behaviour. This is mechanical restraint.

Therapeutic devices help people with everyday activities, improve their functional independence or help their injuries heal. Some examples are:

- devices or mechanical supports used to help a person have good body position, balance or alignment. These help to give the person greater freedom of movement than they would have without the device being used.
- devices to keep all or part of a body still to heal a medical problem (for example, a cast or splint to allow healing).<sup>1</sup>

To understand more about the Senior Practitioner Act 2018, go to:

<https://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/quality-complaints-and-regulation/office-of-the-senior-practitioner>

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<sup>1</sup> Recognising and Reducing Mechanical Restraint: Practice Guide,  
Office of Professional Practice  
<https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/office-professional-practice>