



Auto

ADJUST YOUR HEAD RESTRAINT TO AVOID INJURY

If your car's adjustable head restraint is set in the lowest position, it may not protect your neck in a rear-impact crash. And, chances are, if you drive a pickup, minivan, or older SUV, the protection you receive from your head restraint may not match performance seen in the same manufacturer's other models.

That's the word from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), a longtime, nonprofit research partner with PEMCO in promoting proper use of head restraints.

The IIHS routinely conducts crash tests that measure both the effectiveness of head restraint and seat design in working together to prevent whiplash injuries. Top-performing cars have a combination of geometrically correct head restraints and seats that allow occupants' torsos and heads to move together in rear-end crashes.

Vehicles with head restraints positioned high and close to the head outperform other designs. Some models score lower in tests because they can't be adjusted to accommodate taller people.

DID YOU KNOW?

PEMCO was the first insurance company in the nation to publicize the dangers of improperly set head restraints in radio and TV ads, which first aired in 1992-1993. PEMCO also donated two cars for the IIHS to use in its first-ever head restraint crash tests at its Vehicle Research Center in Virginia in 1992.

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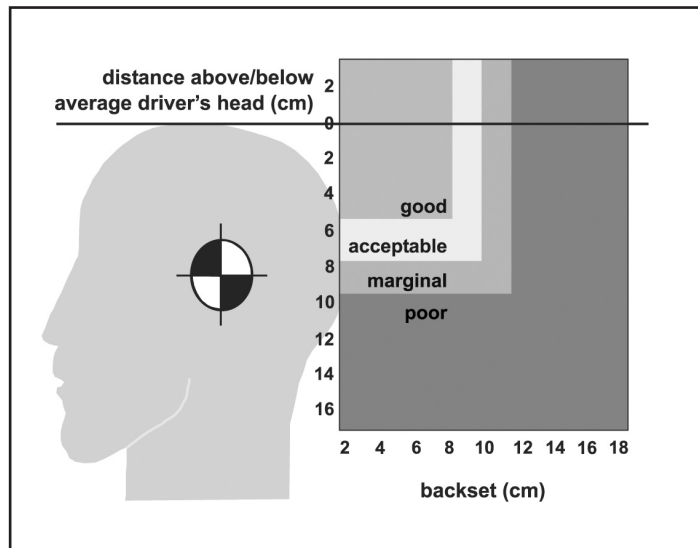
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To do its job, a head restraint must stop the “fulcrum effect” – the hyper-extension of the neck that can occur when a head restraint acts like a lever in rear-end collisions. Your head’s center of gravity is about 3.5 inches from the top. Experts say that’s where the head restraint should be.

The “good” area (see diagram) shows the best position for your head restraint – high and close to your head. Make it a habit every time you get in the car as a driver *or a passenger* – buckle up and check your head restraint. Set it no lower than your ears.



To view test results for current model years, visit iihs.org and search "top safety picks."