

Flying With Lap Babies



Recently I flew to Virginia for a business meeting.

My trek from Oklahoma City to Charlottesville took two flights. While on the first leg of my trip and listening to the safety instructions, I started thinking about the lap child seated in front of me.

I pulled out the instruction sheet to see what they were telling parents of little ones to do in case of trouble. The picture demonstrating the recommended technique showed a mother holding on tight while hunched over her baby.

I wondered how many parents in an emergency situation would attempt to strap their child down? And how tragic either way—strapped or holding—would be for parent and child.

When I arrived home, I just happened to read an article by a former flight attendant and cyberfriend of mine on this very subject. Beth Blair ([The Vacation Gals](#)) asked readers, “Would you ever sit your child on your lap riding on a roller coaster? How about cruising at 75 mph down the highway?”

She explained the airlines policy, which is any child under the age of two can fly for “free” (in the United States) if they sit on an adult’s lap for the entire flight. Beth said, “Some parents assume that if the airline allows lap children, it must be okay. After all, the airlines are the experts, why would they put any of their passengers in danger?”

I cringed when I read this because I was one of those parents who believed, “Well, it must be okay if they allow it!”

What parents don’t realize is if a plane did crash it would be virtually impossible to hang on to your child. And the force of the impact propels a twenty pound baby into an 80 to 100 pound flying object. Strapping a child to you is also a bad idea.

[Beth](#) explains, “If the plane comes to a sudden halt or crash, your body will automatically be thrown forward and forced down, on top of your baby, possibly crushing him.”

Turbulence is also a problem. I remember how difficult it was to simply hang on to Addy when things were calm. Sometimes, the last thing she wanted to do was to sit still in my lap for an extended flight. Forgetting that, turbulence is a regular occurrence and can be rough enough to open overhead bins and throw non-seat-belted adults around.

So what’s a parent to do?

Beth has an answer for that too. “I suggest purchasing a seat for your child the next time you fly.” Parents who purchase seats can also bring a car seat to place (and then be strapped down) in the seat.

In a follow up article, Beth provided another solution to her readers. New on the market is a restraining system for children called CARES ([Child Aviation Restraint System](#)). It’s reasonable—only costs \$75 and weighs only one pound and will protect a child weighing between 22 and 44 pounds.

To order, simply visit their website: <http://www.kidsfllysafe.com>. Manufactured by an airline seat belt maker, AmSafe Aviation, it is reliable and easy to use. Beth demoed the safety straps and provided instructions:

1. Lower tray table behind child’s seat and slide the red harness over the seat.
2. Pull red loop snug about seat back.
3. Tighten red loop 1” above child’s shoulders.
4. Insert lap belt through small black loops, buckle lap belt, fasten chest clip.
5. Tighten lap belt and torso harness.
6. Re-stow tray table.

And if you still need to take your car seat...of course you do! Simply check it with your luggage or think about renting one upon your arrival.