



Air travel tips for parents of toddlers and small kids

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — As I watch my daughters walk toward me in the airport, I remember the not-so-long ago days of juggling two toddlers, car seats, and luggage when I traveled. Not everyone did the car seat thing back then, but I guess when your mom is a paramedic and a former flight attendant you're getting buckled in, no arguing. So, my daughters, now on their own and responsible for their own seat belts, have pretty much got a giant safety tattoo in their brains.

I watch now as they bounce toward me and I smile about seeing them and not having to cart their stuff around through airports anymore (OK, well I did offer to pull the wheelie luggage, but that's a piece of cake compared to car seats, diaper bags, snacks and boarding passes).

There are parents all around me. Some have car seats. I don't envy them. They look tired. Ah, but some of them don't have car seats. Hmmmm. Unsafe? Maybe. Or, maybe they've got one of those lightweight harnesses in a carry-on bag — they didn't exist back in the day.

HARNESSES

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has very specific guidelines about using a safety restraint system for your child while riding in an airplane.

Harnesses need to have a tag showing that they are FAA-approved for aircraft use. The tag will say it is 14 CFR 21.305(d), Approved for Aircraft Use Only.

One popular model called the Child Aviation Restraint System (CARES) is available for about \$75. This belt-and-buckle device that works in conjunction with the regular airplane seat belt and provides young travelers the same level of safety as a car seat. This is a great investment if you and your child travel frequently. You do need to purchase a ticket for your child so you will be guaranteed a seat. Some airlines offer discounted seats for young children. The product is available online and in some stores in Brooklyn, Manhattan and New Jersey. Check their website for ordering or local stores at kidsflysafe.com.