



AIRBAG DEACTIVATION

What you need to know to
make an informed decision

Québec 

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Airbags are proven, effective safety devices. They offer excellent protection against head or chest injuries. When used in combination with seat belts, they significantly reduce the risk of death or serious injury when an accident occurs.

However, airbags sometimes cause injuries when they deploy. Most of the time, such injuries are limited to minor cuts, bruises or abrasions, but very rarely they may be more serious, even fatal. This risk is near zero in more recent models, provided airbags are used properly.

Research has shown that the only thing people killed or seriously injured by airbags have in common is not their height, weight, sex or age, but the fact that they were too close to the airbag when it started to deploy. The risks related to airbags can therefore be reduced by slightly adjusting your seat.

That being said, if an airbag poses a specific risk for one of your vehicle's users, it can be deactivated. In most cases, an airbag is deactivated by means of an on-off switch installed by the dealer or by a business that specializes in modifying vehicles. Other deactivation methods are also possible.

There are several types of airbags: front, side, side curtain and knee. This document is concerned only with deactivating front airbags.



How can I reduce the risks associated with airbag deployment?

- ▶ Maintain a distance of at least 25 cm between the centre of the airbag cover and the centre of your chest.
- ▶ Always wear your seat belt. It is the law.
- ▶ Place children aged 12 or younger in the rear seat using a child safety seat, if required, that is appropriate for their age and size.
- ▶ Carefully read the section explaining airbags in your owner's manual and follow its recommendations.



Maintaining a safe position when behind the steering wheel

Since the risk zone for the airbag is the first 8 cm of its deployment space, positioning yourself at least 25 cm from the airbag provides you with an adequate safety margin. If your current driving position places you less than 25 cm from the airbag, you can change your position in various ways:

- 1 Move your seat as far back as possible, but be sure you can still easily reach the pedals with your feet.
- 2 Recline the back of your seat slightly. Vehicle designs vary, but you can always achieve a clearance of 25 cm by slightly reclining the back of your seat, even if the seat itself has been pulled forward. If you have trouble seeing the road after reclining your seat, adjust the height of your seat if your vehicle allows you to do so.
- 3 If your steering wheel is adjustable, tilt it downward. This directs the airbag toward your chest instead of your head or neck.

1

Move your seat
further back



2

Recline the back
of your seat



3

Tilt the steering
wheel downward



CORRECT

Seat belt buckled,
with the driver at
least 25 cm from
the airbag





What about pregnant women?

Pregnant women should follow the same recommendations as for other adults: buckle the seat belt and stay as far back from the airbag as possible. The lap belt should be positioned low around the hips, and the shoulder belt should rest on the collar bone. Make sure there is no slack in the belt.



Who should consider deactivating an airbag?

- ▶ People who have no choice but to transport a baby in an infant seat in the front passenger seat.
- ▶ People who have no choice but to transport a child aged 12 or younger in the front passenger seat.
- ▶ Drivers who cannot adjust their driving position in order to maintain at least 25 cm between the centre of the steering wheel, where the airbag is stored, and the centre of their chest.
- ▶ People who have obtained a doctor's opinion stating that, due to a health problem, the airbag poses a greater risk for them than the risk of hitting their head, neck or chest in a car crash with the airbag deactivated.

If none of these situations applies to you or to another user of your vehicle, you have no reason to deactivate an airbag.



What should I do if I have to place a child in the front seat?

Use the on-off switch to deactivate the airbag on the passenger side if you have to place a child aged 12 or younger in the front seat for one of the following reasons:

- ▶ The vehicle has no rear seat.
- ▶ The child suffers from a health problem requiring you to monitor him or her.
- ▶ There are more children than there are places in the rear seat.

When transporting a group of children, it is best to use a second vehicle to avoid having to place a child in the front seat.



If an airbag has been deactivated, what precautions should I take for other passengers?

Deactivation of an airbag is a temporary measure taken for a person at risk. When another person occupies the seat, remember to turn the airbag back on.



How do I obtain an on-off switch to deactivate an airbag?

If your vehicle is not equipped with an on-off switch, you must:

- ▶ complete the form *Declaration of Requirement for Airbag Deactivation*;
- ▶ send the form to the Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ), which will keep the original and send you a stamped copy;
- ▶ present the stamped copy to a dealership or a business that specializes in modifying vehicles in order to have an on-off switch installed.

Once the work is completed, the dealership or business that specializes in modifying vehicles must send the declaration form to the SAAQ.

If there is no on-off switch available for your make or model of vehicle, the dealership or business that specializes in modifying vehicles may be able to provide you with other means to deactivate the airbag.

If you opt for a means other than an on-off switch, you must make sure the airbag is reactivated before selling or giving the vehicle to another person, or at least inform the new owner that one of the airbags has been deactivated. You must also inform any person who borrows your vehicle.

Note that dealerships or businesses that specialize in modifying vehicles are not obligated to install an on-off switch or deactivate an airbag by any other means. Any work done on your vehicle is at your expense, as the owner or lessee, and you may also be required to sign a waiver of liability.



CAUTION: If you are leasing the vehicle or if it is subject to a reservation of ownership, you must obtain permission from the vehicle lessor or the holder of the reservation of ownership before installing an on-off switch or deactivating an airbag.

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USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS



To download and print the form
Declaration of Requirement for Airbag Deactivation

[saaq.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/documents/
formulaires/air-bag-deactivation-declaration.pdf](http://saaq.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/documents/formulaires/air-bag-deactivation-declaration.pdf)



For more information about airbags

saaq.gouv.qc.ca/airbags



For more information

Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec
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