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SEATBELTS

While you are reading this, a dozen people are going to be injured in motor vehicle accidents, and one probably will die. There are almost two million vehicle crash injuries each year that are serious enough to disable people. About half of those injuries could be avoided if everyone wore a seatbelt.

Even without being in a collision, a seatbelt may help you keep control of your vehicle by keeping you firmly behind the wheel if you suddenly need to swerve, brake or accelerate. In other words, it can help you avoid an accident.

In a crash, your seatbelt will keep you from flying into the windshield, against the dashboard, against the steering wheel, or into another person in the vehicle with you, and it will keep you from being thrown out of your vehicle. If you are thrown out of the vehicle, you are about 25 times more likely to be killed.

In the crash, with your safety belt on, you'll take most of the impact in your tough shoulder and hip bones, instead of your more fragile body parts or delicate internal organs. And you are more likely to keep conscious and be able to help yourself and others.

Keep your safety belts properly adjusted and securely fastened when you operate or ride in any vehicle. Insist that anybody in the vehicle with you also use the safety belt.

Vehicle accidents are the biggest reason for people missing work time in the United States, and the leading cause of accidental deaths. There are three reasons for these accidents. Alcohol use is one. The speed of the vehicle is the second. The third is the secondary impact during an accident -- people bouncing around inside a vehicle following a crash, and hitting windshields, steering wheels, and each other. This danger can be avoided by using safety belts.

So please ... buckle up whenever you are driving or riding.