CAR SEAT PILLOW

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The car seat pillow is in the form of an elongated, generally cylindrically shaped pillow casing filled with pillow stuffing. Each end face of the pillow is provided with an attaching element to adjustably attach the pillow to the support frame of a car seat. Each attaching element may include a flexible strap for releasable engagement with a corresponding shoulder strap guide formed on the sides of a car seat.
CAR SEAT PILLOW
CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION


BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to car seat accessories, and more particularly to a child car seat pillow.

[0004] 2. Description of the Related Art

[0005] U.S. Pat. No. 5,064,245, issued Nov. 12, 1991 to Stephens, teaches an inflatable pillow construction for mounting and positioning adjacent a side rotating wall of an associated child car seat that includes an elongate tubular cushioned member mounting a pillow member at its upper terminal end. Straps with clips may be provided on the inflatable construction to secure the pillow to the car seat.

[0006] U.S. Pat. No. 4,838,611, issued Jun. 13, 1989, teaches a car seat pillow constructed of foam having a pair of side cushions engageable with opposite sides of a child's head. A neck cushion extends between the side cushions and tether straps are provided on the side cushions for attaching the cushions to the shoulder straps of a child safety harness.

[0007] U.S. Pat. No. 6,266,832, issued Jul. 31, 2001 to Ezell, shows an infant cranial support system adapted to cushion and support the head of an infant carried in an infant restraining car seat. A first toroidal cushion receives the posterior region of the infant's skull and is provided with a relieved region next to the neck of the infant. A second toroidal cushion is preferably provided to encircle the neck of the infant to cushion against lateral and forward motion of the head. The cushions may be releasably attached to each other and at least one strap fastener is provided for attaching the system to the restraining straps of the car seat.

[0008] U.S. Pat. No. 6,523,901, issued Feb. 25, 2003, teaches a child's sleep collar having a pair of collar supports forming a left and a right collar support. Each of the supports has a body, an attachment end, and a coupling end. The attachment end includes an attachment strap and is designed to attach to a left or right belt-positioning clip of a child safety seat. The attachment ends releasably engage each other to prevent strangulation of the child during an accidental impact.

[0009] None of the above inventions and patents, taken either singly or in combination, is seen to describe the instant invention as claimed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0010] The car seat pillow of the present invention is provided in the form of an elongated, generally cylindrically shaped pillow casing filled with pillow stuffing. Each end face of the pillow is provided with means to adjustably tether the pillow to a car seat. The pillow is suspended by the tethering means between the shoulders of a child car seat in a position to comfortably cradle and support the chin and cheeks and control the amount of movement of the nodding head of a properly harnessed sleeping child during maneuvering of the vehicle.

[0011] It is an object to provide improved elements and arrangements thereof for the purposes described which is inexpensive, dependable and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes, which will become readily apparent upon further review of the following specification and drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 is an environmental, perspective view of a car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0013] FIG. 2 is an exploded view of a first embodiment of the car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0014] FIG. 3 is a perspective view of one end of a second embodiment of the car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0015] FIG. 4 is a back view of a typical child safety seat.

[0016] FIG. 5 is a perspective view of one end of a third embodiment of the car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0017] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a variation of the first embodiment of the car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0018] FIG. 7 is a perspective view of an alternative embodiment of the car seat pillow according to the present invention.

[0019] FIG. 8 is a partial environmental perspective view showing attachment of the car seat pillow of FIG. 7 to a car seat.

[0020] Similar reference characters denote corresponding features consistently throughout the attached drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0021] The present invention is a car seat pillow for a forward facing car seat or booster seat 20, as generally indicated in FIG. 1. The pillow is provided in the form of an elongated, generally cylindrically shaped pillow casing 30 filled with suitable pillow stuffing material, including loose foam materials or one-piece molded foam. The casing may be formed of any suitable machine washable material. Preferably, the pillow is between 12-36 inches in length and between two to five inches in diameter. Each end face 31, 32 of the pillow casing is provided with means to tether the pillow to the back 23 of the support frame or the shoulder strap guides 21 provided on the support frame of car seat 20.

[0022] In a first preferred form of the invention, (see FIGS. 1 and 2) the means to tether the pillow 30 to the car seat frame includes a first pillow strap 33 and a second pillow strap 34. One end of strap 33 is secured to end face 31 and the distal end of strap 33 has a female coupling member 35 secured thereto. One end of strap 34 is secured to end face 32 and the distal end of strap 34 has a female coupling member 36 secured thereto. An elongated flexible tether strap 40 is provided that is securable to the back 23 of the support frame of a contemporary car seat. A first end
of the flexible tether strap 40 is provided with a complementary male coupling member 45. A clip 43 is formed on the coupling member 45 for adjustably securing first end 41 thereto. A second end 42 of the flexible tether strap 40 is provided with a complementary male coupling member 46. A clip 44 is formed on the coupling member 45 for adjustably securing the second end 42 of strap 40 thereto.

[0023] Tether strap 40 may be formed of one of canvas, nylon or any other suitable material. Self-tapping threaded fasteners 49 are preferably used to attach the strap 40 to the back 23 of the car seat support frame. The coupling members 35, 45, 36, 46 may be of any type of coupling, buckling or snap-fastener arrangement that is quickly releasable using a single hand. The pillow 30 is suspended by tether strap 40 across the shoulders of child, car seat 20 in a position over harness straps 24 and 25 to comfortably cradle and support the head of a sleeping child. See FIG. 1. When the pillow 30 of the present invention is positioned as recited above, the pillow 30 controls the amount of movement of the nodding head of a properly harnessed sleeping child during maneuvering of the vehicle or during a collision or impact.

[0024] Turning now to FIG. 3, another one of many tethering arrangements that are suitable for use in the present invention is shown wherein the means to tether the pillow to the back 23 of the car seat support frame includes a pair of eyelets 50 in each end face 31, 32. A ring 51, preferably a D-ring, is attached to each end face 31, 32 of pillow casing 30 through eyelets 50. A swivel hook 52 is connected by at least one removable link to each ring 51 attached to end faces 31, 32 of the pillow casing 30. The swivel hooks 52 are sized and constructed for removable attachment to the shoulder belt guides 21 on a car seat frame.

[0025] A variation of the FIG. 2 embodiment is shown in FIG. 6. An elastic cord 70 may be used to replace the flexible strap 40 of FIG. 2. A hook 53 is provided for attachment to each end of cord 70. Cord 70 may be formed of any suitable elastic material, such as a bungee cord. Each end of cord 70 is passed through the eye 54 of a swivel hook 53, doubled back, and provided with a cord lock 80, cable clamp or other suitable device to form a loop 71 holding swivel hook 53. A means for securing the cord 70 to the back of a car seat frame is preferably provided in the form of a U-shaped cable clamp 60 attachable to the back 23 of the car seat frame with a self-tapping threaded fastener 49. However, any suitable cord or cable fastening arrangement may be substituted for the U-shaped clamp 60 and self-tapping threaded fastener 49. The hooks 53 are provided for cooperation with the D-rings 51 on the pillow casing 30 (as shown in FIG. 3) to tether the pillow in position upon the car seat 20. The D-rings 51 may also be attached to the end faces 31, 32 of the pillow casing 30 with straps in the manner of the coupling members 35 and 36 shown in FIG. 2 for cooperation with the hooks 53 at the ends of cord 70.

[0026] Another form of the invention is shown in FIG. 5. The means to attach the pillow to the car seat frame is provided in the form of a flexible or elastic straps attached to each end face 31, 32. A first flexible strap 34 is attached at one end to the end face 31 of pillow casing 30 and a second flexible strap 34 is attached at one end to the end face 32 of casing 30. The strap may be tied by hand to the shoulder strap guides 21, but preferably the strap includes means for forming a loop at the free end of each strap 34 that is attachable to the shoulder strap guides 21 of car seat 20. The loops are attachable to the shoulder strap guides 21, but may alternatively be attached to the hooks 53 of cord 70 secured to the back 23 of car seat. Preferably the means for forming a loop at the free end of each strap 34 are mating hook and loop fastener patches 37 and 38 secured to each strap 34. Alternatively, the means for forming a loop at a free end of each strap 34 may be provided in the form of male and female snap elements (not shown) or any other suitable fastening arrangement.

[0027] In all forms of the present invention the pillow 30 is positioned to restrain movement of the head of the child immediately after the child's body engages the harness during an evasive braking maneuver, collision or impact. All forms of the invention may be used in similar fashion on umbrella strollers or the head rests of conventional adult car seats.

[0028] In the alternative embodiment of FIG. 7, the car seat pillow 100 is constructed similarly to the embodiments described above, including a stuffed pillow casing 130. Pillow casing 130 may have user-selectable indica 120 imprinted thereon through any suitable means. As in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. 5, car seat pillow 100 includes flexible straps 133, 134, each having respective releasable fasteners, herein shown as mating hook-and-loop type fasteners 137, 138. It should be understood that any releasable fastener may be used to form a releasable loop from straps 133, 134. For example, a pair of releasable snap-type connectors may be used, although hook and loop fasteners permit continuous adjustment of the size of the loop and provide a very strong fastener in shear.

[0029] The ends 131, 132 of casing 130 each have a flexible material flap 110 extending therefrom. Preferably, each first fastener 138 is a short hook and loop fastener patch attached to a respective flap 110, and each strap 133, 134 is attached to, and extends outwardly from, a respective flap 110, as shown. Second hook and loop fasteners 137 are elongated hook and loop fastener strips attached to straps 133 and 134.

[0030] In FIG. 8, the car seat 20 is shown as having strap guides 140 joined to opposite edges of the car seat frame, positioned similar to the strap guides 21 shown in FIG. 4. Strap guides 140 are shown as having an alternative configuration to those shown in FIG. 4; however, it should be understood that the function is the same. In FIG. 8, the car seat pillow 100 of FIG. 7 is shown being secured to the car seat 20 by the placement of strap 134 through strap guide 140. Fastener 137 will then releasably mate with or engage fastener 138 to form a releasable loop, and to releasably secure the ends of the car seat pillow 100 to the opposed sides of the car seat support frame.

[0031] It is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to the embodiments described above, but encompasses any and all embodiments within the scope of the following claims.

We claim:
1. A car seat pillow, comprising:
an elongated, generally cylindrical shaped pillow casing filled with pillow stuffing to form a pillow, the pillow having opposing first and second ends; and
means for attaching the pillow to a pair of shoulder strap guides formed on a frame of a car seat in position to comfortably cradle and support a child’s chin and cheeks while controlling movement of a properly harnessed sleeping child’s nodding head in the car seat during maneuvering of a vehicle.

2. The car seat pillow according to claim 1, wherein said means for attaching comprises:

first and second flexible straps extending from the first and second ends of said pillow, respectively, each of the straps having a free end; and

means for forming a loop at the free end of each of the straps, the loops being adapted for attachment to the shoulder strap guides of the car seat.

3. The car seat pillow according to claim 2, wherein the first end of said pillow further comprises a first material flap and the second end of said pillow further comprises a second material flap, said first and second flexible straps being attached to the first and second material flaps, respectively.

4. The car seat pillow according to claim 3, wherein said loop-forming means comprises:

first releasable fasteners attached to said first and second material flaps; and

second releasable fasteners attached to said first and second straps, the second releasable fasteners engaging the first releasable fasteners to form the loops.

5. The seat belt pillow according to claim 4, wherein said first and second releasable fasteners comprise mating hook and loop fasteners.

6. The car seat pillow according to claim 4, wherein said first and second releasable fasteners comprise male and female snap fasteners.

7. The car seat pillow according to claim 1, wherein said pillow casing is hand washable.

8. A car seat pillow, comprising:

an elongated, substantially cylindrical pillow having flaps extending from opposing ends thereof;

a flexible strap extending from each of the flaps; and

mating releasable fasteners attached to the flaps and the straps, respectively;

whereby the straps are adapted for extending through shoulder guides on opposing sides of a car seat frame, the releasable fasteners mating to form loops attaching the pillow to the car seat frame for supporting a child’s chin and restricting forward movement of the child’s neck during sudden stops.

9. The car seat pillow according to claim 8, wherein said mating releasable fasteners comprise:

a first short patch of hook and loop fastening material attached to each of said flaps; and

a second elongated strip of hook and loop fastening material attached to each of said straps, the second hook and loop fastening material adjustably engaging the first hook and loop fastening material so that the loops are adjustable in size.

10. A child’s car seat, comprising:

a child’s car seat frame having opposing sides and shoulder guides attached to the opposing sides;

an elongated, substantially cylindrical pillow having flaps extending from opposing ends thereof;

a flexible strap extending from each of the flaps; and

mating releasable fasteners attached to the flaps and the straps, respectively, the straps extending through the shoulder guides and the releasable fasteners mating to form loops attaching the pillow to the car seat frame for supporting a child’s chin and restricting forward movement of the child’s neck during sudden stops.

11. The child’s car seat according to claim 10, wherein said mating releasable fasteners comprise:

a first short patch of hook and loop fastening material attached to each of said flaps; and

a second elongated strip of hook and loop fastening material attached to each of said straps, the second hook and loop fastening material adjustable engaging the first hook and loop fastening material so that the loops are adjustable in size.

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