

Spotlighting Teen Issues

for
Parents

Teen Driving

Judy Cloud Berryhill, Specialist - Adolescent Development, UT Extension

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motor vehicle accidents are the number one killer of teens. That's more deaths than from alcohol, drugs and suicides combined. Because so many teens are being injured or killed on our nation's roadways, teen driving safety has become a national priority.

Facts Parents Should Know About Teen Driving

- One out of every five 16-year-olds will be involved in a motor vehicle crash.
- Every year more than 300,000 teen passengers and drivers, ages 16 – 20, are injured and nearly 6,000 die as a result of vehicle crashes.
- Thirty-six percent of all teen driving deaths are alcohol related.
- Teens are less likely than other drivers to wear seat belts.

The Role of Parents

Most parents want teens to get their driving licenses because additional drivers in a family can be helpful. However, teens need to become **safe** drivers, which requires extensive practice and experience. The two primary risk factors related to teen driving are driver inexperience and level of maturity.

Driver education can provide teens with a foundation, but it is essential that parents take an active role in teaching teens to drive. Studies have shown that a teen's chances of being in a crash can be reduced by one-third when parents take an active role in their child's driving education and set certain driving guidelines. When parents help reduce teens' chances of being in a crash, they are also helping to protect their teens' lives and prevent costly medical bills.



Statistics You Should Know

- Fifty-three percent of teen driver deaths occur on weekends.
- Teen drivers killed in motor vehicle accidents had a youth passenger in the automobile 45 percent of the time.
- For teen drivers fatally injured in automobile accidents, more than one-third of the accidents were speed-related.

- The teen driver lifestyle of staying up late puts teen drivers at high risk for automobile accidents due to drowsiness.
- Teens are more likely than any other age group to be involved in a single-vehicle crash.
- Male teen drivers were less likely to tailgate or exceed the speed limit when a teenage female was in the front passenger seat.
- Female teen drivers were slightly more likely to tailgate if a female teen passenger was in the vehicle with them.

Guidelines for Teaching Your Teenager to Drive

- Put safety above everything else when driving. Don't try to do too much too soon.
- Don't rush the learning process. If you do, you risk putting your teenager in a situation beyond your and your teenager's capabilities.
- Decide what you want to do before you and your teenager begin a practice session. Tell your teenager what the two of you will practice.
- Encourage your teenager to give you feedback. Make sure your teenager feels comfortable trying to do what you have planned.
- When you give your teenager driving instructions, use a calm tone.
- Never wait until the last minute to tell your teen what you want him or her to do.
- Be specific. Never point with your finger and say, "Let's go over there." Instead, say to your teenager, "When you reach the next traffic light, turn right into the supermarket parking lot."
- Don't expect your teenager to read your mind.

Why Are Young Drivers at Risk?

Teens are at risk because they are more likely to

- drive aggressively
- not wear seat belts
- underestimate the dangers associated with hazardous driving situations

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway

Safety (IIHS), the combination of inexperience behind the wheel and immaturity produces a pattern of fatal crashes, particularly among 16-year-olds. In fact, newly licensed 16-year-olds have the highest fatality rate of any age group of drivers. This age group also has the highest percentage of crashes involving speeding, the highest percentage of single-vehicle crashes, the highest percentage of crashes with driver error and the highest vehicle occupancy or number of passengers in the vehicle.

For More Information

Drive Home Safe

<http://www.drivehomesafe.com>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>

National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)

<http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>

Road Ready (For Parent and Teens)

<http://www.roadreadyteens.org>

Teen Driving

<http://www.teendrivinginfo.com/>

Tennessee Department of Safety

<http://www.state.tn.us/safety/>

References

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. (2005) *Q&A teenagers: underage drinking*. Arlington (VA): The Institute.

Jonah BA, Dawson NE. (1997). *Youth and risk: age differences in risky driving, risk perception, and risk utility*. Alcohol and Drugs Association.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Dept. of Transportation. (2005) *Traffic safety facts 2004: young drivers*. Washington, DC.

Visit the UT Extension Web site at <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/> and the Family and Consumer Sciences Web site at <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/fcs/>

SP681-E 7/07 07-0003