

Spotlighting Teen Issues

for
Teens

Teen Driving

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One of the highlights of the teen years is getting a drivers licence. You have more freedom — your parents no longer have to drive you to school events, the mall or to the movies. However, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that teens, age 16 – 19 years, who are involved in motor vehicle accidents have higher fatality and injury rates than any other age group. This may be attributable to both lack of driving experience and a greater propensity for risk-taking behaviors (e.g., speeding, drunk driving, distracted driving, not wearing safety belts).

Major Factors in Crashes Involving Teens

- ◆ Speed
- ◆ Alcohol/Drugs
- ◆ Ignoring right-of-way
 - ◆ Tailgating
 - ◆ Fatigue
- ◆ Reckless Driving
- ◆ Improper passing and driving to the left of center line



Statistics You Should Know

- Fourteen percent of all deaths due to motor vehicle accidents are teen drivers.
- Fifty-three percent of accidents resulting in 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 an automobile accident due to drowsiness.
- Teens are more likely than any other age group to be involved in a single-vehicle crash.
- Teenage drivers — both male and female — were more likely to tailgate and exceed the speed limit if there was a teenage male passenger in the front seat.
- 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.

Here Are Some Tips for Safe Driving

- **Always wear your seat belt** — and make sure all passengers buckle up, too.
- **Adjust your car's headrest** to a height behind your head — not your neck — to minimize whiplash in case you're in an accident.
- **Never try to fit** more people in the car than you have seatbelts for.
- **Obey the speed limits.** Going too fast gives you less time to stop or react. Excess speed is one of the main causes of teenage accidents.
- **Don't run red lights.**
- **Use turn signals** to indicate your intention to turn or to change lanes and give the cars behind you enough time to react before you take the action. Also, make sure the signal turns off after you've completed the action.
- **When the light turns green, make sure the intersection is clear before you go.**
- **Don't talk on the car phone, put on make-up, comb your hair or eat while driving.** People who talk on car phones while driving are four times more likely to have an accident. If you need to make a call, pull off the road to a safe spot and park.
- **Don't leave your car in cruise control when you're driving late at night or when you're tired.** If you fall asleep at the wheel, the car will crash at the speed you've set.
- **Don't fiddle with the radio while you are driving.** It's better to wait until you can pull over and stop because taking your focus off the road even for a few seconds can lead to an accident.
- **Make sure your windshield is clean.** At sunrise and sunset, light reflecting off your dirty windshield can momentarily blind you.
- **Make sure your car has enough gas.** Don't ride around with the gauge on empty — who knows where you might get stranded.
- **Don't drink and drive and don't ride with anyone who has been drinking.** Call parents or friends to take you home if you need a ride.
- **Don't drive if you've taken any type of pain medication or mind-altering drugs.** Don't ride with anyone who has

been using drugs. Even some over the counter drugs can make you drowsy. Check the label for warnings.

- **Don't blast the radio.** You might miss hearing a siren or a horn that could warn you of possible trouble.
- **Use good quality tires and make sure they are inflated to the right pressure** (check your owner's manual for what is right for your tires and car). Maintain your car. Bald tires, a slipping transmission or a hesitant engine can lead to accidents.
- **Use headlights during daylight driving** to make yourself more visible to oncoming drivers, especially on long stretches of highways and rural roads.
- **Watch out for potholes,** especially after bad weather.

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

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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.

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