

Teenage drivers have a higher risk of being involved in a traffic crash. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among teens.

Many injuries happen in predictable, preventable ways.

Parents should stay involved as the teenager is learning to drive. Supervised practice, continued guidance, and rules after licensing can help protect your teen driver.

Teen Drivers

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among American teenagers.¹
- An average of 7 U.S. teenagers died every day from a motor vehicle crash in 2010.²
- The seat belt use rate for teens is lower than adults; in 2008, teens had the lowest seat belt use rate of any age group at 80 percent.²
- In 2010, 81 percent of teenage motor vehicle deaths were passengers in the vehicle.³
- Texting and having other teens in the car while a teen is driving are the greatest distractions proven to kill teens.⁴
- The majority of teens are sleep deprived. The average amount of sleep suggested for teens is about 8 to 9 hours. The lack of sleep can significantly impair driving.⁵

Prevent Crashes and Fatalities

- Safe and responsible driving begins with each driver and passenger.
- Before the car is started, the seat belt should be secured!
- Secure cell phones in a place where they are out of sight so there is no opportunity to text, talk, or surf the web while driving.
- Putting on makeup, eating, and blasting music are also distractions and can easily cause a crash. FOCUS on the road to avoid any opportunity for a crash.
- Follow traffic safety rules. Tickets are expensive and some violations can result in jail time.
- It is imperative to drive sober. Driving while under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs is not only illegal but slows reaction time.
- Practicing healthy habits, like getting enough sleep, helps teens to stay alert while driving.
- New drivers tend to make some wrong decisions when first getting behind the wheel; the graduated driver licensing (GDL) system helps new drivers gain skills from stage to stage. Each stage offers more experience and more privileges. Parents play a key role at each stage and should become familiar with the GDL system.
- It is also important for parents to take their teen out to practice their skills in a variety of settings, set ground rules for safe driving, and be a good role model. Teens will typically model what their parents do.

Internet Resources

1. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety/Teen+Drivers>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html
3. Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Highway Loss Data Institute: <http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/teenagers.html>
4. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: <http://www.chop.edu/news/teen-passengers-the-other-distraction-for-teen-drivers.html>
5. National Sleep Foundation: <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/teens-and-sleep>

Live Injury-Free!