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HEALTH > TIMES HEALTH GUIDE > S > SAFE DRIVING FOR TEENS

Safe Driving for Teens

Overview

- Alternative Names
Information
References

News & Features

Learning to drive is an exciting time for teenagers and their parents. It opens up many options for a young person, but it also carries risks. Young people between ages 15 and 24 have the highest rate of auto-related deaths. The rate is the highest for young men.

Parents and teens should be aware of problem areas and take steps to avoid hazards.

NEWS & FEATURES

- Learning to Drive With A.D.H.D.
For Teenagers, the Car Is the Danger Zone
Some Caution Signals for Older Drivers

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Alternative Names Back to Top

Driving and teenagers; Teens and safe driving; Automobile safety - teenager drivers

Information Back to Top

Make a Commitment to Safety

Teens also need to commit to being safe and responsible drivers in order improve the odds in their favor.

- Reckless driving is still a danger to teens -- even with automobile safety features.
All new drivers should take a driver's education course. These courses can reduce crashes.

Drivers and passengers should use automobile safety features at all times. These include: seat belts, shoulder straps, and headrests. Only drive cars that have air bags, padded dashes, safety glass, collapsible steering columns, and anti-lock brakes.

Auto accidents are also a leading cause of death in infants and children. Infants and young children should be properly buckled into a child safety seat of the right size.

Avoid Distracted Driving

Distractions are a problem for all drivers. Do not use cell phones for talking, texting, and email when you are driving.

- Mobile phones should be turned off when driving so you are not be tempted to make calls or answer the phone.
If phones are left on for emergency use, pull off of the road before answering or texting.

Other tips include:

- Avoid putting on makeup while driving, even when stopped at a light or stop sign, it can be dangerous.
Finish eating before starting your car and driving.

Driving with friends can lead to accidents.

- Teens are safer driving alone or with family. For the first 6 months, teens should drive with an adult driver who can help them learn good



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driving habits.

- New drivers should wait should wait at least 3 to 6 months before taking friends as passengers.

Teenage-related driving deaths occur more often in certain conditions.

Other safety tips for teens

- Reckless driving is still a danger, even when using seatbelts. Don't rush. It safer to be late.
- Avoid driving at nighttime. Your driving skills and reflexes are just developing during the first months of driving. Darkness adds an extra factor to cope with.
- When drowsy, stop driving until fully alert. Sleepiness may cause more accidents than alcohol.
- **Never drink and drive.** Drinking slows reflexes and hurts judgment. These effects happen to anyone who drinks. So, NEVER drink and drive. ALWAYS find someone to drive who has not been drinking -- even if this means making an uncomfortable phone call.
- Drugs can be just as dangerous as alcohol. **Don't mix driving with marijuana, other illegal drugs or any prescribed medicine that makes you sleepy.**

Parents should talk with their teens about "household driving rules."

- Make a written "driving contract" that both parents and teens sign.
- The contract should list the rules and what teens can expect if rules are broken.
- The contract should state that parents have the final say about driving rules.
- When writing the contract, take into account all the driving issues that are likely to come up.

Parents can do the following to help prevent teens from drinking and driving:

- Tell their teens to call rather than get in a car with a driver who has been drinking or when they have been drinking. Promise no punishment if they call first.

Some children continue to mix driving and drinking. **In many states the parent must sign for a teenager under 18 to get a driver's license. At any time before the 18th birthday a parent can refuse responsibility and the state will take the license.**

References

[Back to Top](#)

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