



5 Minute Safety Talk



Teen Safe Driving

The biggest threat to your teen's safety is sitting in the driveway.

The first year of licensed driving is the most exciting yet most dangerous year of a teen's life. As a parent, the facts can be hard to hear, but are crucial to keeping your teen safe. Car crashes, after all, are the number one killer of teens.

Total fatalities in crashes involving 15-20 year old drivers exceeded 4,800 in 2016 (Injury Facts, 2018). As their parents, we want to keep our teen drivers safe—and we can, if we understand the risks teenagers and young adults face. We can help them beat the odds by staying involved as they gain experience behind the wheel, especially within that first year, as they transition from having a permit to being a solo driver.

Teen Driver Risks

What you should know:

Inexperience

- Teens crash most often because they are inexperienced – not because they take more risks behind the wheel. The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute identified the three most common errors of teen crashes: distraction by something inside or outside the vehicle, lack of scanning the roadway, and driving too fast for conditions. You can help reduce these risks by focusing on them during driving practice with your teen.

Cellphones

- We all know that using the phone while you're driving is dangerous. Unfortunately, that's not enough to stop some of us. Multi-tasking is something a lot of us are convinced

we do well. You might be surprised to learn that's not true at all—for teens or adults. When we multi-task, our brain is really switching back and forth between doing various tasks. Depending on the task and the person, switching can be very quick and appear seamless. However, every time the brain switches tasks, it slows reaction time. That's not a big deal when your teen is texting a friend while watching TV, but it can be deadly behind the wheel. Hands-free won't cut it either. A driver on the phone can miss up to 50 percent of the driving environment. And that distraction can linger, studies show, up to 27 seconds after the calls ends.

- Silence your phone and other devices and put them out of arm's reach before starting the vehicle.
- Pull over to a safe location and put vehicle in park if a call must be made.

Passengers

- Not all distractions revolve around what the driver is doing. One of the most dangerous has a very familiar face: other teen passengers—and even little brothers or sisters—are one of the biggest distractions teens face in the car. Just one teen passenger increases a teen driver's fatal crash risk by 44 percent.
- Don't ask your teen to drive younger siblings around even if it's inconvenient for you.
- Don't let your teen be a passenger in another teen's car.

Scanning the Road

- With years of driving under our belts as experienced adults, we have gotten very good at reacting to and avoiding hazards on the road—most of the time. But our newly licensed teens still have a lot to learn. The science says they only have about three seconds to react and prevent a crash: one to recognize



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the hazard, two more to react. Unfortunately, in many instances, new teen drivers are unable to identify a potential hazard in the first place, much less react to it.

- Teach your teen to always be scanning the road for potential hazards.
- Talk with your teen about potential hazards in a variety of roadway environments including construction zones, parking lots and near pedestrian walkways.

Speeding

- We've all done it at some point in our driving life, but speeding is a dangerous behavior which we shouldn't pass on to our kids. Remind your teen to slow down in poor weather conditions, such as fog, as reducing your speed below the limit gives you more control over the car. New teen drivers have yet to learn how their car will react in different traffic and weather situations. They often don't know what is appropriate, and they don't fully understand the risks.
 - Take your teen out on a rainy or snowy day and let them learn how the car reacts with less traction and how reducing speed can help them better control the car in these conditions.
 - When driving, ask your teen what the posted speed limit is. This reinforces scanning the road and being aware of their speed.

Night Driving

- Research shows that 19% of fatal crashes involving a teen driver between the ages of 15 and 17 occur between 6 – 9 pm. These are the ages when many teens receive their permit, progress through GDL* and start their first year of licensed driving. When looking at all teen drivers between the ages of 15 and 19, almost 18% of crashes occur between 9 pm – midnight.
 - Give your teen plenty of opportunities to learn how to drive at night with you or an adult supervisor in the car.
 - Let your teen know you can pick them up rather than letting them drive in dangerous night time conditions.

*Graduated Drivers Licensing

GDL limits passengers, nighttime driving, and other risky situations for new teen drivers.

These laws, however, are not enough, and additional parent involvement and practice helps keep teens safe. Visit iihs.org and search GDL to learn more about the laws in your state.

What can you do?

If you have a teen, make an effort to stay involved in your teen's driving, from their driver's education classes all the way through their first full year of driving. You can do this by continuing riding with your teen. Be sure you enforce the GDL laws of your state along with setting your own expectations to protect the safety of your teen. For additional resources and tips on coaching your teen, **visit driveithome.org**.

