



Teen Driving

Each day, there are more than 15 crashes involving drivers between the ages of 15 to 20.

You do not need to have a teen driver in your home to be affected. In fact, 2 out of 3 people killed in crashes involving teen drivers are people other than the teen driver – including passengers of teen drivers, occupants in other vehicles, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

For teens, the risk of being in a car crash is at a lifetime high in the first 6 to 12 months and 1,000 miles of driving¹. A teen's risk of being in a crash can be reduced by a combination of practice, gradual exposure to higher-risk situations and parental supervision.

One of the most effective methods proven to reduce teen crash risk by up to 40% is Graduated Driver Licensing². All but one state have adopted some form of GDL, but GDL laws vary from state to state. States with stronger, more comprehensive GDL laws have experienced remarkably fewer teen crashes.



DID YOU KNOW?

Parents play a crucial role in the enforcement of GDL. When parents understand the crash risks, they understand and support how GDL helps reduce these risks. University of North Carolina teen driving researchers surveyed parents in three states where teens drive under GDL laws and found:

- 96% “highly approve” or “approve” of GDL
- Nearly nine out of ten parents support a 12-month learner’s permit period
- Nearly nine out of ten parents support a 9 p.m. driving curfew

By coaching teens, parents can help to manage the driving experience. This is made easier through a shared plan defining restrictions, privileges, rules and consequences that are agreed upon. Also, parents can lead by example and model the behavior they expect from their teen.



**Parents need to make
a commitment to work
closely with their teens.**

5 Steps to Reduce Teen Driver Crashes:



1. Set a Nighttime Driving Restriction

Teens drive only 15% of their miles at night, but 40% of their fatal motor vehicle crashes happen during that time period.³ Even for experienced drivers, the chances of being in a crash are about three times greater at night than during daylight hours. The National Safety Council recommends no unsupervised driving after 10 p.m., earlier is even better.



2. Set a Passenger Restriction

For teens, one passenger increases their crash risk by 48%, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. That risk grows exponentially as more passengers are added – 258% more likely to crash with two passengers and 307% more likely with three or more. Having several teens in a vehicle turns it into a social environment where driving behavior can be negatively affected. The National Safety Council recommends zero passengers younger than 18 be allowed during a teen's first 12 months of driving.



3. Ban Cell Phone Use While Driving

NSC estimates indicate 23% of all crashes involve cell phone use each year. NHTSA found teens are more likely to use cell phones behind the wheel than any other age group. According to the Pew Research Center, more than half of teens ages 16 to 17 admit to talking on a cell phone behind the wheel. Cell phone use should be banned among all drivers, and parents need to lead by setting a good example.



4. Prohibit Alcohol

Drinking and driving remains a problem among teens. According to NHTSA, nearly one-third of drivers ages 15 to 20 who were killed in crashes had been drinking. Every state has a zero tolerance law for underage drivers who drink. This means teen drivers cannot have any measurable alcohol in their system.



5. Make Safety Belts Mandatory

Safety belts are the most effective safety device in vehicles and everyone should be buckled in at all times. NHTSA data shows wearing a safety belt can reduce the risk of crash injuries by about 50%.

It is important to be aware of the laws within your state, but any parent can enforce GDL best practices within the home. For more information, visit teendriver.nsc.org.

¹ Mayhew, Simpson & Pak, 2003
² Journal of Safety Research, 2007
³ Journal of Safety Research, 2003