

About **Teens and Injuries**

Injuries can be prevented. As a parent you may already be familiar with some safety measures, such as seat belts, and bicycle helmets, so you know there are ways to increase safety. Every family must identify its own dividing line between acceptable and unacceptable, safe and dangerous behaviors.

Quick Facts

Injuries kill more teens than all diseases combined.

Car crashes are one of the leading causes of death and disability among teens today.

At least one teen dies of an injury every hour every day in the United States.

Other causes of injury or death among teens include drowning, sports injuries, and rape.

More teens are being killed by guns than ever before.

Most teens do not like and do not wear bike helmets.

Adolescents are less likely to use seat belts than any other age group.

Understanding and obeying the rules of the road are important components of safe cycling.

Alcohol is involved in about 35% of teen driver fatalities.

Tips for Parents

1. Set clear rules for driving or riding in a car.

- Make seat belt use mandatory for the driver and passengers.
- Don't allow teens to drive when they are upset or angry.
- Limit your teen's driving to daylight hours and restrict it to your local community if he or she is an inexperienced driver.
- Continue to supervise your teen's driving after he or she has a license.
- Discuss safe driving rules and the consequences of not following rules. Talk about getting a ticket; being involved in an accident; driving while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs; and getting home from an unsafe situation.
- Ask your teen where he or she is going and with whom.
- Make sure your teen understands that alcohol and other drugs are not allowed in the car.
- Tell your teen to never get into a car with a driver who has been drinking.
- Encourage your teen to call home and be picked up—with no questions asked—if he or she or the driver has been drinking.
- Talk about taking rides from older teens your teen doesn't know and from brothers and sisters of friends.
- Get the names and phone numbers of drivers, especially on Friday and Saturday nights.
- Tell your teen never to ride in the "bed" of a truck.

2. Set clear rules for safe biking.

- If your teen wants to ride a bicycle, a bicycle helmet is a must.
- Review the rules of the road for bikers.
- Encourage your teen to avoid riding a bicycle when it is dark.
- If your teen rides a bicycle at night, a reflective vest or other gear and reflectors on the bicycle are mandatory.

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3. Increase water sports safety.

- Make sure your teen can swim. If your teen does not know how to swim, enroll him or her in lessons.
- Do not allow your teen to swim or boat alone.
- Remind your teen to jump—never dive—into water the first time to check its depth. It may be too shallow for diving.
- Tell your teen to never combine the use alcohol or other drugs with water sports.

4. Encourage your teen to wear protective sport gear.

- Depending on the activity, this may include face protectors, helmets, knee, elbow, and wrist pads, and mouth guards.

5. Reduce the risk of firearm injury to your teen.

- Do not keep a gun in your home.
- If you have a gun, keep it unloaded and locked up.
- Lock and store bullets separately.

6. Be a role model.

- Obey traffic regulations and speed limits.
- Wear your seat belt; don't speed; don't drink and drive.
- Stay in control of your emotions when driving.
- Wear a helmet when driving a motorcycle or riding a bicycle.
- Wear reflective clothing when riding a bicycle at night.

Resources

Your teen's health care provider.

Adolescent Health On-Line
<http://www.ama-assn.org/go/adolescenthealth>

American Academy of Pediatrics
<http://www.aap.org>

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc>

Children's Safety Network
617 969-7101
<http://www.childrensafetynetwork.org>

National Safe Kids Campaign
<http://www.safekids.org>

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