

# *Teens / Adolescent Awareness*



## Driving

### Drinking and Driving

Teenage drivers are almost 20 times more likely to die in a car crash when they are under the influence of alcohol. One in five teenage drivers in a fatal crash has alcohol in their system.

#### How to Prevent Drinking and Driving:

- Enforce minimum legal drinking age laws.
- Graduated driver licensing programs enable teens to attain more experience and reach goals as they move through stages of learning.

#### *Did You Know?*

- Zero tolerance laws make driving after drinking alcohol illegal for teens under age 21.
- Parents can help prevent teenage driving fatalities. Keep track of what your teenagers are allowed to do as they start to drive and restrict certain activities. Make an agreement about driving rules and have a plan to get them home safely if a driver has been drinking.

*Information gathered from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)*

### Speeding

Teenagers are likely to misjudge their speed on the road – a deadly combination considering it only takes three seconds to have an accident. Speeding accounts for over half of fatal crashes involving teenage drivers and almost 90 percent of fatalities involved teens speeding on roads other than highways. Teenagers also allow less room between vehicles when speeding, making them more prone to causing an accident.



Parents should educate their child about following the speed limit and keeping the appropriate distance from other cars.

### Seatbelts

Two thirds of teens killed in car crashes were not wearing a seat belt.

Parents should teach their child to buckle up before putting the key in the ignition.

### Seatbelt Statistics

- Almost 60 percent of teenage drivers killed in vehicle crashes were not wearing a seatbelt.
- Fifty percent of passengers killed in car accidents involved a teen driver not wearing a seatbelt.
- Adolescents in states with seatbelt laws are about 12 percent more likely to use seatbelts.
- Teens have the lowest usage of seatbelts out of any group. They don't use them for short trips and avoid buckling up in order to impress peers.
- Teens with parental involvement are more likely to use seatbelts.

*Information gathered from Teen Driver Source  
[www.teendriversource.org](http://www.teendriversource.org)*

## Distracted Driving

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) identifies distracted driving as “any activity that could divert the person’s attention away from the primary task of driving.” Distracted driving accounts for about 16 percent of teenage driving fatalities.



### Three Types of Distracted Driving:

- Manual distractions: removing your hands from vehicle controls.
- Visual distractions: taking your eyes off the road.
- Cognitive distractions: thinking about something other than driving.

### Distracted Driving Facts:

- Every 30 seconds a car crash occurs as a result of cell phone use.
- Driving and using a phone takes up almost 40 percent of the brain activity used for driving.
- Calling or texting while driving is the same as having a blood alcohol content at the legal limit.

- Texting and driving puts you at eight times the normal risk of having an accident.
- Texting and driving is equal to driving blind through a football field at 55 mph.

Most drivers realize when others are driving distracted, but find reasons to excuse their own risky distractions. Be responsible and save a life – put extra activities on hold until you take a break or reach your destination. One second of distracted driving is all it takes to impact a life forever.

*Information gathered from Owen’s Foundation  
and End Distracted Driving  
[www.orange4owen.org](http://www.orange4owen.org)  
[www.endddd.org](http://www.endddd.org)*

## Drinking

### Underage Drinking

Drinking too much alcohol can be harmful to adults, but children pose an additional risk when experimenting with alcohol. Teenagers who drink are at a higher risk of becoming victims of sexual assault and violent crimes. Traffic accidents involving alcohol are another danger. When children start drinking at a young age, they are prone to develop alcohol addiction as they get older.

Peer pressure is a major factor for teens as they try to fit in with other groups. Parents need to educate children about the dangers of alcohol and seek help from an expert if their child is using alcohol.

*Information gathered from Medline Plus  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)*

### Mixing Caffeine and Alcohol

The use of caffeine and alcohol is increasing among adolescents and college students. In

a study of 13 to 20 year olds, over half the participants admitted to drinking caffeine with alcohol. Younger kids were more likely to ingest caffeine and alcohol drinks than older children. Caffeine hides the symptoms of alcohol intoxication and leads young adults to drink more than their bodies can tolerate. Mixing caffeine with alcohol is a deadly combination for teens and causes physical and mental health problems, addiction, injury and fatalities.

*Information gathered from Medline Plus  
[www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus)*



## Wellness

### Sleep

The average teen needs eight hours of sleep each night, but many are not getting adequate amounts of sleep. Teenage hormones are in flux, causing them to fall asleep late and sleep in longer than younger children and adults. Teens stay up late finishing homework and are busy with sports, after school activities and part-time work. A sleep deficit compounds the problem, triggering attention problems and mood changes. Signs and symptoms of too little sleep include: inability to concentrate, difficulty waking up, sleeping during

classes, changes in athletic and extracurricular performance, depression and mood problems.

### How to get enough sleep:

- Set a bedtime to train your body when to sleep.
- Exercise on a regular basis.
- Avoid stimulants like coffee, soda and alcohol.
- Relax your brain – stay away from scary or violent movies and books before bed.
- Dim the lights one hour before sleep.
- Avoid using the computers and other devices with lit screens.
- Keep naps to no longer than 30 minutes.
- Study regularly to avoid all-night cramming prior to tests.
- Keep your room dark and cool to promote sleep.
- Use a bright light when the alarm goes off to signal your body it is time to wake up.

*Information gathered from TeensHealth  
<https://secure02.kidshealth.org/teen>*

## Bullying

Emotional damage from bullying impacts self-esteem and puts teens at risk of depression and suicide. Bullying can be verbal teasing or physical hitting and shoving. Social bullying involves deliberately ruining friendships, starting rumors and excluding kids from group activities. Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of electronic technology. Texts, emails, online rumors, video and photo sharing, and creating false profiles on social networking websites are examples of cyberbullying.

Warning signs of being bullied include unexplained injuries, change in character and eating habits, trouble sleeping, self-blame, not wanting to attend school, talk of suicide, and feeling sad and helpless. Bullies tend to have

difficulty dealing with anger and blame others. They are likely to have an overwhelming desire to succeed and are quick to be manipulative and violent.



## Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can make it impossible to track back to the source and delete embarrassing information. If online bullying occurs, parents should take action immediately and ask their child to ignore, unfriend and block the bully. Report the bully to an internet provider. Document and save threatening messages and call the police if your child's safety is threatened.

## Depression and Suicide

- Bullies and their victims are at greater risks of depression and suicide.
- Victims of cyberbullying develop depression at a greater rate than victims of in-person bullying.
- Children prone to bullying tend to keep anxiety and depression to themselves.
- Bullying victims are often rejected by peers and lack self-esteem and assertiveness.

- Bullying frequently results in social isolation and can lead to drug and alcohol abuse.
- Childhood bullying can lead to depression and risk of suicide well into adulthood.

## Bullying Prevention and Response

- Stay aware of teens' online activities.
- Be aware of the websites and social media children use.
- Ask your child for their passwords to keep on hand in case of bullying.
- Promote an open dialog with your child about online and in-person bullying.
- Request teens to notify you immediately of any bullying.

If your child is bullied, therapy can help increase self-esteem and assertiveness, confidence in social settings, and make them less likely to develop depression.

*Information gathered from Bullying Statistics,  
Center for Safe Schools, Stop Bullying.gov  
and Cyberbullying Research Center  
[www.bullyingstatistics.org](http://www.bullyingstatistics.org)  
[www.safeschools.info](http://www.safeschools.info)  
[www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)  
[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)*

## Gasping – Choking Game

The Choking Game is a way to get “high” without using drugs. Teenagers use hands, belts or ropes to block blood from reaching the brain. After a few seconds, they release the choking pressure and the rush of blood to the brain gives them a warm, tingly sensation.

Choking or “Gasping” is considered cool and some teens do it to fit in, while others like the feeling it provides. Warning signs include marks on the sides of the neck, eye stress, or change in personality.

## Dangers of the Choking Game:

- Passing out before releasing the belt or ropes causes seizures, stroke, falls or death.
- Lack of oxygen causes brain cell death and after 4 to 5 minutes, the child can die.
- Teens play the game with others and then do it alone with no one to help if they pass out.

*Information gathered from GASP  
www.gaspinfo.com*

## Hands-Only CPR

Sudden cardiac arrest is a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. As a leading cause of death in the United States, more than 350,000 Americans die annually. Therefore, sudden cardiac arrest causes more deaths than lung cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and AIDS combined.

According to the American Heart Association, 70% of Americans feel helpless to act during a cardiac emergency. For every minute a bystander does not provide care to the victim, the victim loses a ten percent chance for survival. Learning just a few simple steps could save a life and create a lifetime of memories.

1. Check if the person responds to you by tapping their shoulder and shouting "Are you okay?"
2. If there is no response, send someone to call 911 and find an AED.
3. Position yourself directly over their body. Put the heel of one hand in the center of the chest. Place the other hand on top of the first hand. With straight arms, push hard and fast in the center of the chest.
4. Press hard and fast, at least 2 inches and approximately 100 compressions per minute. 100 compressions per minute is equivalent to the beat of the Bee Gee's song, Stayin' Alive. Remember to allow



the chest rise completely between each compression.

5. Keep going. Don't stop compressions until the person shows a sign of breathing, the scene becomes unsafe, an automated external defibrillator (AED) is ready, you are too exhausted to continue, or a trained responder takes over.
6. Consider receiving formal training and encourage others to get trained.

*Information gathered from American Heart Association  
and American Red Cross  
www.handsonlycpr.org  
www.redcross.org/prepare/hands-only-cpr*

## Skateboarding

One-third of 50,000 yearly skateboarding injuries involve inexperienced skateboarders. Teens new to the sport have less coordination, balance, and reaction times than adults. Injury to hands, wrists and shoulders results from poor judgment of ramp and barrier heights, road surfaces and traffic.



### Tips to avoid serious injury:

- Wear well-gripping shoes, helmets and protective knee and elbow pads.
- Make sure your helmet is fitted properly and replace it every five years or when damaged.
- If you are going to fall, crouch down towards your board and try to roll to absorb the impact.
- Learn how to stop before you test your skills at a skate park or on the street. Use proper foot breaking - put your weight on your front leg and drag your back foot to slow down.

## Sports Injuries

Young adults' brains are still developing, making them highly susceptible to head injuries. Multiple head injuries result in having to leave competitive sports. Many injuries stem from muscle overuse and overtraining, instead of finding a routine matching skill level and sport. To prevent injuries, ask for help when creating an exercise regimen. Use correct protective gear, like helmets and pads, and follow the rules of the game to keep yourself safe.

*Information gathered from UPMC Sports Medicine and StatePoint Media, Inc.  
UPMCSportsMedicine.com  
StatePointMedia.com*

## Cell Phone Safety

Follow these tips to stay safe:

- Be cautious when giving out your number. Most phones are equipped with devices and applications which enable location tracking.
- Never take pictures or videos of a sexual nature. They are considered child pornography (a felony in most states) even if the parties involved had permission. It takes one person to share your text and create dire consequences for you and your future.
- Some phones feature parental controls - your private conversations may not be so private after all.
- Consider the ramifications of sexting when at school. If you are in violation of policy, your school has the right to take your phone.
- Your phone activities are legal digital evidence and saved by internet servers, SIM cards and phones belonging to your contacts.
- If you receive a text or image from a stranger, do not open it. Block the number.
- Keep your phone locked. If your phone is stolen or grabbed by a friend, you are at risk of having your personal images and activities shared.
- Owning a cell phone is not a right. Your parents trust you to use it wisely. Legal problems can cause you to miss out on college opportunities and jobs.

*Information gathered from the  
Cyberbullying Research Center  
[www.cyberbullying.us](http://www.cyberbullying.us)*

## Prescription Medications and Poisons

- Over 500,000 emergency room visits are due to misuse or abuse of prescription painkillers.

- Prescription medication-related emergency room visits increased by almost 50 percent among children under 20 years old.
- About one in five teenagers has used prescription medication to get high.
- Driving under the influence of drugs is an increasing problem facing teenagers, in addition to dangerous over the counter drug abuse, drug interactions and interactions with existing medical conditions.
- Teens obtain medications from relatives, pharmacies, friends, hospitals, doctors, the internet, or street sellers. Repeated use results in physical and psychological dependence, tolerance, medical emergencies and death.
- Parents should talk with their teen about medications. A drug that is prescribed for one person does not mean it is safe for someone else to use. Make sure your teens know why you are taking certain drugs.
- Keep addictive medications in a safe place.
- Report suspicious internet pharmacies to the DEA and participate in Take-Back programs for medications you no longer use.

*Information gathered from GetSmart About Drugs  
www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com*

## Fire Safety – Be Alert

Fire safety awareness prevents fire-related emergencies at home and at college. Remember these tips to stay prepared and safe in case of fire:

- Be aware that drugs and alcohol dull awareness and reaction time to fire emergencies.
- Smoke detectors are simple and easy tools to keep you safe. Replace smoke detector batteries and conduct a test at least once a year.
- Pay attention to evacuation routes and fire safety materials.
- Know how to contact the fire department.

- Notify proper authorities of damaged or non-working fire alarms and smoke detectors.
- Make sure doors and windows open properly.
- Take fire drills seriously and plan escape routes.
- Use extension cords correctly and do not overload electrical outlets.
- Use heating and cooking appliances properly and always stay in the room when in use.

*Information gathered from The U.S. Fire Administration  
www.usfa.fema.gov*

## Bike Safety

Bike-related injuries are frequently caused by lack of basic bike safety. When riding, go with the flow of traffic and obey traffic laws, including when to yield. Stay alert and ride in a straight line. Look before you turn and watch for parked cars and opening car doors.

### Make sure you are safe and ready to ride:

- Wear a well-fitted bike helmet.
- Adjust your bike to fit your body. When riding a road bike, allow one to two inches between your body and the top bar. Mountain bikes require three to four inches.
- Inflate tires and ensure brakes are in working condition.
- Always wear neon or bright colors and reflective tape or clothing.
- Let your hands remain on the handlebars - carry other items in a backpack.
- Keep your eyes on the road for hazards like glass, potholes, loose gravel, wet leaves and traffic.
- Avoid biking at night.

*Information gathered from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
www.nhtsa.dot.gov*



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