



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Kids Will Be Kids*

*Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2011*

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*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

The teenage years are times for learning, growing, and experiencing new things. However, a recent survey of high school students found many adolescents participate in behaviors or activities that increase their risk for injury, illness, or death.

Dr. Danice Eaton is a researcher with CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health. She's joining us today by phone to discuss the importance of helping teenagers make healthy choices. Welcome to the show, Danice.

[Dr. Eaton] Thank you. It's nice to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Danice, what are the risky behaviors and activities among teenagers that cause concern?

[Dr. Eaton] Well, we're concerned about any risk behavior that can lead to injury or disease among youth. Our study indicates that during the past 30 days, nearly one in five US high school students smoked cigarettes and one in three had sexual intercourse. During the past 12 months, we found that one in three had been in a physical fight.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any encouraging trends that you are seeing as you monitor these behaviors?

[Dr. Eaton] Yes. One encouraging trend is the significant reduction in risk behaviors related to motor vehicle crashes which are the leading cause of death among teens. In particular, during the past two decades, we've seen decreases in the percentages of students rarely or never wearing a seat belt, riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol, and driving when drinking alcohol.

[Dr. Gaynes] What is contributing to these improvements?

[Dr. Eaton] There are many policy and environmental factors that are likely contributing to these improvements, such as the adoption of graduated driver's licensing laws by states. Also, alcohol use, in general, has been decreasing among high school students since the late 1990s. For example, 33 percent of high school students reported binge drinking in 1997, compared to 22 percent in 2001.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there any new risk behaviors that you are seeing?

[Dr. Eaton] Yes. We're seeing that the use of technology among youth has resulted in new risks. For the first time in 2001, we have national data on texting while driving, and we found out that one in three high school students had texted or e-mailed while driving during the 30 days before the survey.

[Dr. Gaynes] How can parents and others influence healthy behaviors in teenagers?

[Dr. Eaton] We know that effective parental monitoring can reduce adolescent's risk for many behavioral and health problems. Parents should talk with their teen about rules and expectations, and they should explain the consequences for breaking those rules. And parents should also know who their teen's friends are and what their plans are when they're spending time with them. And for behaviors, such as texting while driving, parents can serve as an important role model by not engaging in the behavior themselves.

[Dr. Gaynes] Danice, where can listeners get more information about risky behaviors among teenagers?

[Dr. Eaton] They can go to [www.cdc.gov/yrbs](http://www.cdc.gov/yrbs).

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Danice. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Danice Eaton about the importance of helping teenagers make healthy choices.

Parents, teachers, and others who can influence young people should regularly discuss the dangers of risky behaviors and the importance of developing healthy habits early in life.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.