



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Staying Safe Behind the Wheel

National Teen Driver Safety Week — October 19–25, 2008

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[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.

Teenagers are indestructible — or so they think. High-risk behaviors just seem to come with the territory. Nowhere is this more evident than behind the wheel of a car. In 2006, over 4100 teenagers ages 16–19 died as a result of a motor-vehicle crash, and almost 400,000 were treated for injuries sustained in a crash.

Dr. Arlene Greenspan is a senior scientist with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss ways to keep your teenaged driver safe. Welcome to the show, Arlene.

[Dr. Greenspan] It's a pleasure to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, are the numbers of injuries and deaths among teen drivers increasing or decreasing?

[Dr. Greenspan] While deaths and injuries due to motor-vehicle crashes are beginning to decrease in teens, they continue to be the leading cause of death for all teens.

[Dr. Gaynes] So, how do the rates of motor-vehicle crashes and related deaths among teen drivers compare with other age groups?

[Dr. Greenspan] Per mile driven, teens are four times more likely than older age groups to be in a motor-vehicle crash, and senior citizens are the only age group that are more likely to die in a crash than teens.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, what kind of behaviors do teens engage in while driving that most often result in a crash?

[Dr. Greenspan] Teens' lack of maturity and inexperience often get them into trouble. Text messaging and talking on cell phones distract teenagers and can cause crashes. Other activities that are distracting to teenagers, such as having other teen passengers in the car and eating while driving, can also cause motor-vehicle crashes.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what strategies have proven most effective in keeping teens safe behind the wheel?

[Dr. Greenspan] Graduated driver licensing systems are most effective in preventing car crashes among teens. Graduated driver licensing, or GDL, allows teens to drive under low-risk conditions before they have full driving privileges. The most comprehensive graduated driver licensing systems reduce teen deaths by as much as 38 percent.

[Dr. Gaynes] What aspects of the graduated driver licensing system are actually most effective?

[Dr. Greenspan] Nighttime driving restrictions and teen passenger restrictions are most effective at reducing teen-related crashes. We think that teen passenger restrictions reduce the number of distractions teens have while driving. It is more difficult to drive at night, so limiting their nighttime driving also reduces their risk.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, what can parents do to encourage their kids to drive safely?

[Dr. Greenspan] There are four things parents can do to help their teens become safer drivers. First, be a good role model for your teen. Second, talk to your teens about safe driving practices. Third, supervise your teen's driving. Take them out driving often and in different conditions and different times of day. And the fourth thing you can do is after your teen gets his or her license, monitor your teen's driving and complete a parent-teen driving agreement, which clarifies your teen's driving responsibilities, outlines your rules, and outlines penalties for violating those rules.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about driver safety?

[Dr. Greenspan] For more information, listeners should go to www.cdc.gov and search on "Young Driver Spotlight," spelled s-p-o-t-l-i-t-e.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, thanks for sharing this information with our listeners today.

[Dr. Greenspan] Thank you. It was my pleasure.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, that's it for this week's show. Be sure and join us next week. Until then, 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 or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.