



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Teen Driver Safety

Fatal Crash Involvement by Drivers Aged 16–17 Years — United States, 2004–2008

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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.

One of the highlights of a teenager's life is getting a driver's license. However, the excitement of getting behind the wheel can overshadow the responsibility of operating a car. Motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among adolescents in the U.S.

Dr Arlene Greenspan is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss ways to keep new teen drivers safe behind the wheel. Welcome to the show, Arlene.

[Dr. Greenspan] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, how many teenagers are involved in fatal crashes each year?

[Dr. Greenspan] In 2008, more than 1400 16 and 17 year old teens were involved in fatal crashes. That's more than any other age group.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is the number of deaths increasing or decreasing?

[Dr. Greenspan] Thankfully, the number of fatal crashes that teen drivers are involved with has been decreasing. Since 2004, teen driver-related fatal crashes have decreased 36 percent.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, to what do you attribute the large decline in recent years?

[Dr. Greenspan] Most experts agree that graduated driver licensing programs have contributed to this large decline. These programs allow teens to gain driving experience under low-risk conditions, such as limiting driving at night and with teen passengers.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many states have graduated drivers' licensing programs?

[Dr. Greenspan] Currently, 49 states and the District of Columbia have graduated driver licensing programs. However, states vary greatly in the comprehensiveness of their programs.

[Dr. Gaynes] Well, what can parents do to help their kids become safer drivers?

[Dr. Greenspan] There are several things parents can do. First, before teens even get their learners permit, parents need to model safe driving practices. Second, when teens get their

learners permit, parents need to supervise their driving as often as possible – a minimum of 30 to 50 hours – giving them practice under several different road conditions and weather conditions. Third, once a teen gets his or her driver’s license, parents need to monitor their driving. This can best be done with a parent-teen driving agreement where parents and teens decide the limits that should be placed on the teen’s driving and consequences if teens do not live up to the expectations. And fourth, parents should spread the word to other parents in their community.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, where can listeners get more information about teen driver safety?

[Dr. Greenspan] Listeners can get more information at www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Arlene. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Dr. Arlene Greenspan about ways to keep teens drivers safe behind the wheel.

Remember, before teens are allowed to drive alone, parents should teach and model good habits and supervise their teen’s driving often, in a variety of road conditions.

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 or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.