

Parents Are the Key—Help Protect Your Teen Driver

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

[Julie Hentz] If you have a teenager, it's second nature to be concerned about their safety. We love our kids and want to do everything we can to help them grow up to reach their full potential. But when they become old enough to drive, it seems like that job gets a little harder.

Car crashes are the number one killer of teens, taking over 4,000 young lives every year. The good news is that parents can make a difference by getting involved with their teen's driving.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has launched the "Parents Are the Key" campaign to support parents in their efforts to keep teens safe behind the wheel. With us today is Dr. Arlene Greenspan, from the CDC's Injury Center, to share some information about what parents can do to keep their teen driver safe. Welcome, Dr. Greenspan.

[Dr. Greenspan] Thanks for having me.

[Julie Hentz] Dr. Greenspan, what is the "Parents Are the Key" campaign all about?

[Dr. Greenspan] "Parents Are the Key" is a campaign to help parents learn how to protect their young drivers' health and safety on the roads. Believe it or not, when asked whose opinions they listen to, most kids say it's their parents. That's why leading experts believe parents play a key role in preventing teen car crashes and deaths. "Parents Are the Key" campaign information is all free of charge and available at www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey.

[Julie Hentz] What can parents do to make the whole process of learning to drive as safe as possible?

[Dr. Greenspan] First of all, talk with your teen about the dangers of driving, and keep the conversation going over time. In addition, supervise your teen's driving as often as possible. He should have at least 30 to 50 hours of supervised driving practice over a period of at least six months. Practice on a variety of road conditions at different times of day. The more practice your teen gets now, the better his skills will be when driving alone. Also, establish and enforce rules and provide limits on your teen's driving. Insist that she always wear a seatbelt, which can greatly reduce the chance of being killed or injured in a crash. Set limits on nighttime driving; for example, be sure your teen is off the road by 9 or 10 PM. One more thing you can do is restrict the number of teen passengers that can travel with your young driver. Nearly two out of three teen crash deaths involving 16-year-old drivers happen when a new driver has one or more teen passengers in the car. Finally, practice, set the rules, and enforce the rules.

[Julie Hentz] How can parents spread the word about “Parents Are the Key” to other parents in their community?

[Dr. Greenspan] Personal blogs and online social networks, such as Facebook and MySpace, are ideal places to spread safe teen driving messages among your friends. Post a link to the “Parents Are the Key” Web site and ask your friends to check it out. Add the “Parents Are the Key” widget to your blog or send a safe driving e-card.

You can also spread the word at work, in PTA meetings, and in any social groups or volunteer organizations you’re involved in. Consider handing out posters, flyers, and other “Parents Are the Key” materials.

For additional ideas on how to get the word out and to order free copies of campaign materials, including a sample parent-teen contract, visit the “Parents Are the Key” Web site at www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey.

[Julie Hentz] Dr. Greenspan, thanks for sharing information with us about “Parents Are the Key.” Helping teens stay safe on the road is a great way to protect the ones we love.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.