



## **A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC**

### *Keeping Kids Safe Behind the Wheel*

National Teen Driver Safety Week — October 18–24, 2009  
Recorded: October 13, 2009; posted: October 15, 2009

*[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.

For many kids, getting a driver's license is the highlight of their young lives. For many parents, allowing their child to get behind the wheel of a car is a nerve-racking experience - and for good reason. In 2007, more than 4,200 teens aged 15–19 were killed and almost 400,000 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor-vehicle crashes.

Dr. Arlene Greenspan is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the important role parents play in teen driving safety. Welcome to the show, Arlene.

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

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, what factors contribute to deaths and injuries from these crashes, among teens?

[Dr. Greenspan] Many of the factors that lead to crashes in teens are the same as adults, such as speeding and distractions, but because of teens' lack of experience and maturity, these factors are worse in teens. There are other factors that are exclusive to teens, such as driving with other teen passengers.

[Dr. Gaynes] What steps are states taking to try and reduce the number of injuries and deaths among young drivers?

[Dr. Greenspan] Most states have established graduated driver licensing systems. These systems allow teens to gain experience under lower risk conditions before gaining full driving privileges. Zero tolerance for alcohol and minimum legal drinking age laws at 21 have also lowered teen crash and death rates.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, what role do parents play in improving the safety of their children behind the wheel?

[Dr. Greenspan] Parents play a critical role. There are four things parents need to keep in mind. First, parents are important role models for their teens. They should always wear their seat belt, obey all traffic laws, and drive without distractions. Second, parents need to talk to their kids often about the importance of safe driving and risk factors that can result in crashes. Third, parents need to supervise their teens in the learning to drive process. Teens need experience

behind the wheel often, at different times of day, under different road conditions. Fourth, parents need to establish and enforce rules of the road with their teen drivers. These are best enforced with a Teen Driving Agreement.

[Dr. Gaynes] Arlene, what are some basic rules parents should set before allowing their children to drive?

[Dr. Greenspan] There are several basic rules parents should set before their kids go out on the road. First, teens should always wear a seatbelt. Wearing a seatbelt will reduce your teen's risk of being injured in a crash by about 50 percent. Second, teens should never drive while distracted. That includes not using cell phones, texting, or any other things that will cause a distraction, such as eating. Finally, parents need to make sure that their teens follow all traffic laws, including those special laws for teen drivers, such as limiting night time driving and limiting the number of teen passengers in the car.

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

[Dr. Greenspan] Listeners can get more information at [www.cdc.gov/injury](http://www.cdc.gov/injury) and click on "Teen Drivers."

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Arlene. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Arlene Greenspan about the important role parents play in teen driving safety.

Remember parents, you do play a major role in teaching your children to be safe drivers. Demonstrate good driving habits and establish and enforce rules of the road to reduce the chances of *your* child being killed or seriously injured in a car crash.

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, 24/7.