



share the drive: Parents Matter

TEACHING YOUR TEEN TO BE A SMART PASSENGER TOP 10 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Did you know that crashes are the leading cause of death for adolescents who are still too young to drive, and that the risk increases with each teenage year? More than half of teens who die in crashes are passengers, with alcohol involved 21 percent of the time. Teen passengers raise their risk of dying in a crash when they don't wear a seat belt and when they ride with a new driver or on high-speed roads. In fact, they are twice as likely to die in a crash with someone under age 20 at the wheel than with an adult driver.

The good news is that you can help avoid a family tragedy if you take preventive steps now, before your child begins riding in others' cars. Start talking about driving safety by age 12. Set rules and be firm around safety. Do it because you love your child. You could save her life.

Here are some other helpful tips from parents to keep your teen passenger alive:

1. ***Insist on seat belts.*** All occupants should buckle up on every trip, every time.
2. ***Set a good example.*** Your child is watching you. Don't drink and drive. Avoid distractions like cell phones. Obey the speed limit.
3. ***Set rules about safe passenger behaviors.*** Discuss what's helpful or distracting to a driver.
4. ***Monitor your child's travel.*** Know where she is going, how she will get there, whom she is with and when she will be home.
5. ***Know and trust the driver.*** Before letting your child ride with someone, talk to the driver's parents about her experience as well as the purpose of the trip and safe routes. It is not safe for your child to ride with a teen who has less than one year of driving experience. Even the most mature teen needs time behind the wheel to learn to drive well.
6. ***Understand the attraction to accept a ride.*** Teens are very busy and impatient, and they need to get places *fast*. If someone offers them a ride, they will want to take it. Be ready to pick up your children anytime, anywhere, no questions asked. If you can't be there, provide safe alternatives.
7. ***Expect peer pressure.*** Teens will want to accept a ride from a friend, especially someone older. Help them by rehearsing how to handle this tough social situation. It might be as simple as, "No thanks; my mom is on the way." With enough practice, they'll be comfortable declining offers for a ride.
8. ***Take the blame.*** Sometimes teens need an excuse to get out of difficult situations. Let them blame your "stupid" rules. They'll stay safe while saving face with friends.
9. ***Create a code word.*** Help your teen get out of unsafe situations by calling you with a previously agreed-upon code word that signals trouble. When you hear the word, pick your child up right away.
10. ***Catch your child doing what's right.*** Your son or daughter wants to do the right thing. Positive reinforcement will help develop a responsible driver and young adult.

Learn more about teen driver safety at www.chop.edu/youngdrivers.

www.chop.edu/youngdrivers

This page may be reproduced exclusively for not-for-profit patient education.

 The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia®
Hope lives here.

