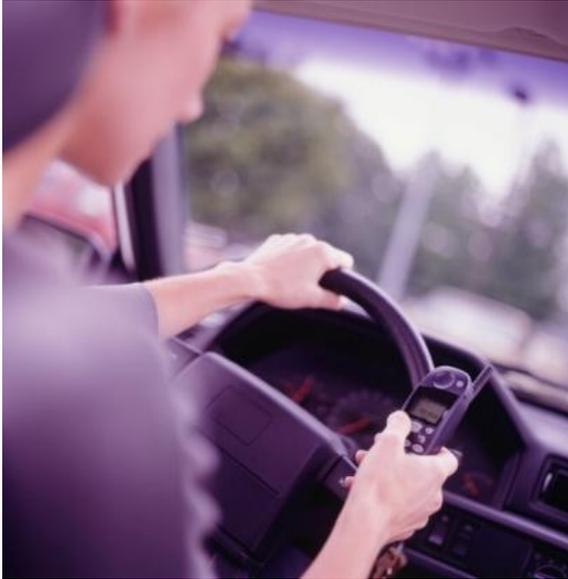


No Texting Behind the Wheel



Jupiter Images

Ice cream and apple pie? Great mix.
Texting and driving. Not a good mix.

Sure, learning to drive is one of life's great milestones. Cell phones and other electronic technologies have also enhanced our lives with the speed and ease of retrieving information as well as staying connected. However, some things are just not supposed to mix.

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. In 2008, more than 3,400 teens aged 15 to 19 were killed by motor vehicle crashes. Teen drivers are four times likelier to crash than older drivers. Overall, younger drivers lack experience on the roads and are less likely than older drivers to recognize risky situations. While lack of experience increases teens' crash risk, so does driving with teen passengers while unsupervised. As the number of teen passengers goes up, so does the risk of a crash.

Distracted driving is especially dangerous. In 2008, nearly 6,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver and more than 500,000 people were injured. Distracted driving is driving while doing another activity that takes your attention away from driving, such as texting. Texting is a visual, manual, and cognitive distraction while you take your eyes off the road, hand off the wheel, and mind off driving. It takes the driver's attention away from driving more frequently and for longer periods than other distractions. Younger, inexperienced drivers under the

age of 20 may be at highest risk because they have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes.

Preventing Distracted Driving

Many states are enacting laws—such as banning texting while driving—or using graduated driver licensing systems for teen drivers to help raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and to keep it from occurring.

The Department of Transportation recently launched a national campaign to encourage the public to get involved in ending distracted driving. Put it Down focuses on the key messages that drivers can't do two things at once, and everyone has a personal responsibility to pay attention while behind the wheel.

Parents are the KEY

Interestingly, when asked whose opinion they listen to and care about most of all, most teens will name their parents. That is why leading experts believe parents play a key role in preventing teen car crashes and deaths.

Steps for parents to reduce serious injury and death:

- ♣ Talking with teens about the dangers of driving
- ♣ Express your concern for his or her safety and well-being
- ♣ Keep the conversation going over time
- ♣ Extend your teen's supervised driving period
- ♣ Set the rules of the road
- ♣ Enforce rules with a Parent-Teen Driving Contract

Continue to talk often with your teen about his or her driving habits.

Believe it or not, your teen is listening to you.

For more information on Teen Drivers, go to http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/Teen_Drivers/index.html.

For the Parent-Teen Driving Contract, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/TeenDrivers/>.

For more information on the Put it Down campaign, visit www.distraction.gov.