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TOP 10 TIPS FOR PREVENTING TEEN ACCIDENTS

1 Develop a positive attitude about driving

Many teen crashes aren't caused by a lack of skills or knowledge. It's often an issue of attitude and maturity. Be sure to develop and practice a responsible driving attitude.

2 Get as much supervised driving practice as possible

Work with your parents to develop a schedule so they can supervise your driving. Practice driving in different conditions so you know what to expect in inclement weather, heavy traffic, urban and rural situations and night driving. This will give you more experience and will increase your confidence behind the wheel.

Commit to supervised, driving practice for at least six months so that you can become familiar and comfortable with the road before you take the driver's license test.

3 Make sure to "Click It"

Get into the habit of wearing your safety belt all the time. There's no question; safety belt use saves lives.

4 Understand the consequences of driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol

Drinking alcohol or using drugs when driving is totally unacceptable. Not only are drug use and teen alcohol use illegal – they also can impair your senses. Even if you've consumed only one drink or smoked one joint, there is a chemical effect on your brain that can affect judgment and reaction time.

Realize that driving under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or other drugs is clearly dangerous. It can cost you your license – or your life.

Visit www.Freevibe.com for more facts on drug use.

5 Limit the number of riders in the car with you

If you are a new driver, limit the number of riders in the car while you are driving. Your risk of a fatal crash increases with every additional passenger.

6 Stick to daytime driving

Stick to daytime driving when you first get started. Your risk of a fatal crash is three times higher at night per mile driven than in the day.

7 Keep it slow and safe for starters

Stay away from fast-moving, heavy traffic until you've had plenty of supervised practice. Once you're more comfortable with driving, you can gradually take on more difficult situations, such as highway driving, merge ramps and major urban areas.

Don't forget that speeding is the #1 reason new drivers lose control of their vehicles.

8 Train for bad weather

Rainstorms, snow, sleet and ice can be scary and dangerous – even more so when you're an inexperienced driver. Get as much supervised practice on the road in bad weather conditions as you can.

9 Put your calls on hold

Don't get into the habit of talking on your cell phone while you drive. Use a cell phone for emergency situations only. If it's necessary to use your phone, pull safely over to the side of the road.

10 Drive a safe car

The kind of vehicle you drive is as important as the way you drive. If possible, avoid small cars, trucks and sport utility vehicles. Larger cars offer better protection in a crash, and are less likely to tip or roll over than trucks and SUVs.

If you're thinking of getting your own car, look for one with high safety ratings. Federal statistics and consumer report literature can help you identify these. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety also offers valuable vehicle and safety advisories. You can go to www.highwaysafety.org for results of the latest IIHS vehicle tests.

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