

Passenger Safety and Teen Driving

As a new driver, you anticipate the day you get the keys to your first car. The thought of expanding your independence with your friends can be enticing! Whether it's to start their part-time job, head to college, or to drive extracurricular activities after school, these teens are preparing to hit the road, many without knowing the dangers that they could be potentially facing. While texting and driving has been one of the most discussed forms of distracted driving recently, driving with passengers can be just as life threatening. Did you know that:

- Passengers increase the risk of fatal crashes in all car accidents
- The level of risk substantially increases when the passenger is another teenager
- Adding 2 Passengers under the age of 21 doubles the risk of car crashes
- Adding a Passenger over the age of 35 reduces the same risk by 62%

Motor vehicle crashes are known to be one of the leading causes of teenage death. Does this mean, no teenage date nights? No, carpooling to high school? No, riding to the movies together? Not necessarily, many states have put laws in place to ensure the safety of teens and the other drivers on the road which is known as the Graduated Driver License (GDL) Program. For more information about Tennessee's GDL program, . [click here](#)

While the focus is on the driver, as the responsible motor vehicle operator, the passengers should share some of that responsibility as well. Teen passengers become injured and die in the motor vehicle crashes at similar rates to teen drivers. It is important that passengers are aware of who they are riding with, the level of experience that person possess behind the wheel, and where they are going. Holding a friend or loved one accountable while riding in a car is a great form of practicing injury prevention. If you are the passenger of a vehicle, remind the driver to:

- Buckle up every time

- No texting and driving
- Obey the speed limit
- Remind the driver that you are fully capable of picking the music selection and relaying the GPS directions.

The Teen Driver Safety Program at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt addresses the growing problem of teen motor vehicle crashes in Tennessee. The Be In The Zone (BITZ) Teen Motor Vehicle Safety program is funded by Ford Motor Company and Community Services and The Allstate Foundation.

<https://www.nsc.org/driveithome/teen-driver-risks/passengers>

<https://aaafoundation.org/teen-driver-risk-relation-age-number-passengers/>