

December 10, 2008

### Caution: Teen Drivers Ahead



As holiday parties are in full swing, it's important to reinforce the rules of the road with your teen. Too often teens drive while under the influence, but that influence extends beyond alcohol. Thirteen percent of high school seniors reported driving under the influence of marijuana, a number nearly equivalent to those who reported drinking and driving (14%).<sup>[1]</sup>

Talk to your teen about other driver distractions that can impair their driving abilities, like texting and talking on the phone while behind the wheel. In a recent survey, nearly 61% of 16- and 17-year-olds said they send text messages while driving, and 51% reported talking on the phone while driving.<sup>[2]</sup> Let your teen know that these risky driving behaviors are more likely to cause crashes.

Get the facts on [drugged, drunk, and distracted driving](#).

#### **Driving is a privilege, not a right!**

Does your teen understand that driving is a privilege - and it can be revoked at any time? Remind them that they have to earn the right to use their car keys and they will be taken away if they are caught driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, texting, or talking on the phone while driving.

**Encourage your teen to make smart driving decisions.**

**1. Set a positive example.** Make a commitment to avoid talking or texting while driving. Remember, you are the most important influence on your teen.

**2. Conduct a car check.** If you have reason to believe your teen is using drugs or is engaging in risky behavior, check the car for suspicious packages and/or drug paraphernalia.

**3. Go on a test drive.** Ask your teen to take you for a spin and look for signs of risky driving behaviors, like talking on the phone or playing with the radio. Take time to reinforce safe driving practices.

More [tips for parents of teen drivers](#).

**Set limits and talk to your teen** about rules and expectations, and consequences for breaking the rules.

[1] Unpublished estimates derived from U.S. Census Bureau and Monitoring the Future data from O'Malley, Patrick and Johnston, Lloyd, "Unsafe Driving by American High School Seniors, 2001-2006" *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, November 2007.

[2] Seventeen Survey: Are you a dangerous driver? *Seventeen*, August 2007.