



Safety Tips for Dads To Keep Teens Safe

(Ages 15 to 19 Years)

Accidents happen to everyone, but there are things we can do to make them happen less often and be less dangerous. To keep teens safe, the first step is to know how they are most likely to get hurt. Drawing on data from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control,¹ this guide gives information about the kinds of accidents that are the most common and the most dangerous for **children between the ages of 15 and 19**, and then offers suggestions about what dads can do to help avoid these accidents and other problems.

Most teens do not get seriously hurt, but it is important to know what dangers they face. Sometimes, parents worry about the dangers that grab the headlines, but those usually are not what hurt the most teens.



¹National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. (2015). WISQARS online reports Available at: <http://cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/>

Deaths from accidents and serious injuries are more common for teens than for younger children. Teens can feel overconfident and may not always realize how dangerous something can be. They are also likely to try dangerous things to impress their friends or be like them. All of this means that they take more risks, which can get them hurt. If they are using drugs or drinking alcohol, it is even harder for them to make good decisions.

Car crashes are the number one cause of accidental death among teens. While this is a major cause of death at all ages, it is especially a problem for teens just learning to drive (or riding with friends who are just learning to drive). The second most common cause of death for teens is

poisoning, which includes alcohol poisoning and drug overdoses. The third most common cause of death among teens is a category called “other,” which includes deaths from falls, guns, suffocation, and fires. Pedestrian and bike-related deaths as well as drowning are also risks at this age. Most teens who drown are boys who have been drinking alcohol.

Teens also go to the emergency room for accidents more than younger children.

Falling, or running into a person or thing, such as a fence, are the most common reasons for emergency room visits. “Overexertion” in teens, which includes sprains and muscle strains, occurs a lot. Many of these injuries happen while playing sports. Serious cuts from knives or other sharp tools are another common type of injury.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING SERIOUS INJURIES TO TEENS

- 1. Talk with teens about alcohol and drugs.** Even if it seems that your kids are not listening, it is important to talk about alcohol and drugs because what you say matters. Make sure they understand that you disapprove. Also, make sure they know they can call you to bring them home or get help for themselves or their friends, even if they have been drinking. Talk to them more than once about this topic.
- 2. Always wear a seat belt when in a car, and drive safely and carefully.** Teens learn from what you do as well as what you say (and being a good role model keeps you safer, too).
- 3. Teens are at greatest risk of getting into an accident in the first few months after they get their driver’s license.** For new drivers, put limits on time they spend driving alone or when they might be distracted. This includes driving with their friends, driving to places they do not know, driving at night, or driving when they are tired.
- 4. Teens should always wear protective gear (helmets, pads, etc.) when playing sports, riding bicycles, or skating.** The equipment must be in good condition and fit well or it will not give them much protection.

5. **Teens should learn and practice the right way to participate in sports.** For instance, they should warm up by running before playing a game of basketball and know the right way to pitch a baseball. These types of skills will help them avoid serious injuries from overexertion.
6. **Teach safe cooking skills.** Learning to cook is an important life skill and teens need to know how to cook safely. For example, they should always cut away from their body, keep their fingers away from the blade of the knife, and know how to avoid burns.
7. **Make your home safe from fires.** Heaters and stoves should not have things like cloth or paper near them, and you should only use them when someone is in the room and awake. Never smoke in bed. Check smoke alarms often to make sure that they have fresh batteries and they work, and make sure teens recognize the sound of the alarm and know where to go if there is a fire. Property owners are required by law to put smoke alarms in their rental properties in most states. You can also call your local fire station or American Red Cross to find out where to get free smoke alarms for your home.

A special note on other common causes of teen deaths

Sadly, many teens die from causes that are not accidents. The two most common causes of non-accidental teen death are suicide and murder, often involving guns.

Mental illness plays a large role in suicide risk, and it is a major problem in the teen years. Suicide is the second most common cause of death for teens, after car accidents, and guns played a role in nearly half of teen suicides between 2011 and 2013. To limit the risk of suicide, keep guns out of the home or in a locked safe.

Go to a professional if you see signs that your child is having problems, including:

- feeling hopeless;
- trouble sleeping (sleeping too much or not enough);
- feelings of being trapped or having no purpose in life;
- taking part in risky activities (including drug or alcohol use)*;
- pulling away from friends and family;
- rage or uncontrolled anger;
- dramatic mood changes; and
- giving away prized possessions.

Pay extra close attention if your child has a mental illness or a history of being abused, since they may be more at risk of suicide.

*It is normal to do some risky things in the teen years. Pay attention, though, if it gets worse suddenly, or if it is worse than other teens the same age.

More Information

Bicycle safety tips:

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/KidsandBikeSafetyWeb>

Drowning prevention:

<http://ndpa.org/resources/safety-tips/layers-of-protection>

Home fire safety:

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/home-fire>

Kitchen safety:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/youth/restaurant/index.html>

More on teen risks and dangers:

<http://www.worryclock.com>

Preventing sports injuries:

http://www.cdc.gov/safechild/Sports_Injuries/index.html

Suicide warning signs and prevention:

<http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/preventing-youth-suicide-tips-for-parents-and-educators>

Talking to teens about alcohol:

http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/MakeADiff_HTML/makediff.htm

Teens and risk-taking:

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Teen-Drivers>

Teen driving safety:

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/bike/KidsandBikeSafetyWeb>

Underage drinking facts:

<http://teendriving.aaa.com/CT/going-solo/underage-drinking>

Wearing seat belts:

<http://www.safekids.org/tip/seat-belt-safety-tips-pdf>

