



# Family Safety & Health

## HOME FIRE SAFETY

for seniors

Be a role model

## BEHIND THE WHEEL

# Stay connected

while physical distancing

Be safe and healthy while

## WORKING FROM HOME

Time for a

## COLONOSCOPY?

## CAFFEINE:

6 things to know



# Drive safety home



## Parents need to be role models

BY KEVIN DRULEY

If you're a parent, your influence on your child's future driving behaviors begins sooner than you might think. "Children are watching their parents drive just about from the time they get turned around from their back-facing to front-facing car seat," said Catherine McDonald, senior fellow with the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "When a teen gets their learner's permit, they probably have been watching their parents drive for 13 to 14 years, in some capacity."

That's why it's important for moms and dads to set a good example.

## Know your role

Teens need a firm foundation in driving safety. As a parent, you can help build it by, for starters, not using your cellphone – either handheld or hands free – in the car. This includes when you're stopped at traffic lights.

"Teens need all of their attention on the roadway and the task at hand with driving," McDonald said. "Any activities that can divert their eyes away from the roadway or their mind from the task of driving or their hands from the wheel takes away from that capacity as they're driving."

Here are other behaviors the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia Research Institute says parents should model:

- Don't speed.
- Always wear a seat belt.
- Make sure you know directions to where you're going before setting off.

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- Don't drive aggressively.
- Never drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or while drowsy.
- Don't apply makeup, eat, or adjust the radio or other devices.
- Don't tailgate.

"It's just setting the teen driver up for success before they even start driving," said Jacob Smith, transportation safety program manager at the National Safety Council.

Parents aren't perfect, though. If you make a driving error in front of your child, McDonald recommends you turn it into a teachable moment.

"When a parent realizes that they didn't exhibit the behaviors they would have wanted to or the example that they would have wanted to for their child or their teen,

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say, 'Hey, what I did there wasn't safe. I'm sorry that you saw that and I'm sorry that I did that, and here's what I could do differently next time,'" she said.

## Rules of the road

A teen's greatest lifetime risk of crashing exists during the first six months to one year after receiving a driver's license. Driver Source, a Children's Hospital of Philadelphia resource, as well as NSC and other organizations, recommend establishing house rules on driving and creating a parent-teen driving contract.

Among NSC's guidance for parents and caregivers:

- Stay involved. Drive with teens to monitor their progress and offer coaching as needed.
- Be patient and encouraging. Remind yourself that most situations your teen driver encounters are new to them.
- Make arrangements to get your teen home if it's unsafe for the teen or someone else to drive.

McDonald said it's important to convey to new drivers that setting house rules isn't intended to stifle their independence or privileges, but rather to keep them and all others on the road safe. Rules such as wearing seat belts on every trip and not engaging in distracted or impaired driving should be non-negotiable, she said, but others involving driving at night or with peer passengers can be adjusted as the driver's experience grows and as your state's laws permit.

"Parents know their teen well," McDonald said, "and if they feel that they need to have house rules that are a little more strict at the beginning of that independent licensure phase, that's OK. Clear communication of the expectations and the rules is key."

And remember, your influence doesn't end when your teen gets a driver's license.

"The final stage is a lot of reinforcing," Smith said. "When you get your license, it's sort of like you're on your own. You're doing what you need to do, you have all of this confidence. But that's really an important time for a parent to step up and reinforce those things." [FS&H](#)

## Reinforcing the message



Once your teen has a driver's license, stay involved. Find helpful resources, including a "new driver deal" agreement, at [nsc.org/driveithome](http://nsc.org/driveithome).

**DriveitHOME**