



Teen Driver Safety

Teen Driver Risk in Relation to Age and Number of Passengers

The Situation

- Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States
- Teen crash rates are nearly four times higher than those of adult drivers
- Carrying passengers, particularly other teens, greatly increases crash risk for teen drivers
- Most states have enacted passenger restrictions as part of graduated driver licensing systems, and studies indicate that passenger restrictions do reduce crashes
- Data used to examine teen crashes involving passengers are over a decade old

New Study: [Teen Driver Risk in Relation to Age and Number of Passengers](#)

- Provides new data on the relationship between the number and age(s) of passengers present and the crash risk of 16- and 17-year-old drivers
- Uses data from teen crashes that occurred in years 2007-2010 and the number of miles driven in years 2008-2009, to calculate risk of crash involvement and driver death per mile driven
- Estimates crash risk for 16- and 17-year-old drivers with no passengers; with one, two, and three or more passengers younger than 21 (and none older); and with at least one passenger 35 or older

Key Findings

- Compared to driving with no passengers, a 16- or 17-year-old driver's risk of death per mile driven:
 - **Increases** 44% when carrying one passenger younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
 - **Doubles** when carrying two passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
 - **Quadruples** when carrying three or more passengers younger than 21 (and no older passengers)
 - **Decreases** 62% when a passenger aged 35 or older is in the vehicle
- The risk of a 16- or 17-year old driver being involved in a police-reported crash of any severity appeared to follow a similar pattern, but the risk increases were not statistically significant. (The risk decrease associated with carrying an adult passenger was significant, however.)

Teens have the highest crash rate of any group in the United States.



- Between 2000 and 2010 the annual number of 16- and 17-year-old drivers involved in fatal crashes fell by 53%; however, carrying passengers is still a significant risk factor for this age group
 - Of the 2,191 16- and 17-year-old drivers killed over the study period, nearly 40% had at least one passenger younger than 21 (and no older passengers) in the vehicle
- Risks were significantly reduced when an **adult passenger** (aged 35 and older) was present in the vehicle

Useful Resources

AAA and the AAA Foundation have developed the following teen driver resources:

- TeenDriving.AAA.com – This AAA site provides state-specific information to help parents and their teens navigate the learning-to-drive process. Tailored content guides families through each step in the process, from teaching safe behaviors even before teens get learner’s permits to keeping parents involved as teens begin driving on their own.
- [Driver-Zed](#) – This interactive risk-management training tool is designed to help teens recognize how to react in a variety of driving scenarios.
- [AAA StartSmart](#) – AAA StartSmart is an online program designed to help families get through the crucial period when teens are learning to drive, through a series of videos and e-newsletters based on a proven program from the National Institutes of Health. A key component is the AAA Parent-Teen Driving Agreement.
- [Dare To Prepare](#) – Dare to Prepare is a 90-minute pre-permit presentation for parents and teens to provide critical information families need to know before teens take the wheel. This presentation walks attendees through the steps necessary to obtain a permit and a driver's license, and offers useful tools to help families through the learning-to-drive process. A shorter online version of the program is now available at www.TeenDriving.AAA.com.

For more information about teen driver safety and the AAA Foundation’s research in this area, please visit www.AAAFoundation.org and www.TeenDriving.AAA.com.

