

REDUCING the Risk

A Parent's Guide to Teen Driving

Your influence *can* make a difference

More than 700 teenagers die each year in Canada as a result of an injury. At SMARTRISK, we understand you cannot stop young people from taking risks and that risk taking is an important part of a fulfilling life. However, you can help by encouraging your teens to consider or re-think their actions. In helping youth see the risks in their everyday lives and showing them how to take those risks in the smartest way possible, they can enjoy life to the fullest.

The good news is parental involvement is a key factor in making sure teens avoid injury. Research points to parents as their teenagers' leading source of information and influence on their risk-taking knowledge, attitudes and behaviour – even greater than their peers. Knowing that you can influence your teens' risk-taking behaviour – where do you start?



Choices, not lectures

Many teenagers feel invincible and can't imagine becoming seriously injured or killed. Remember that for many teens, they don't aspire to be "safe" and don't want to listen to lectures. SMARTRISK uses and advises a positive approach to preventing injury: arm teens with the facts and offer concrete ways to take smart risks – Buckle Up, Look First, Wear the Gear, Get Trained and Drive Sober.

Talk to your teens about the risks and how they can be smart about them. Come up with a set of house rules you can both live with – and stick to them. Ensure your teen knows how to manage their risks while participating in a variety of activities: driving, snowmobiling, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding and cycling.

The risks

- ◆ 7 out of 10 deaths among Canadian teenagers are a result of injury.
- ◆ Preventable injury kills more than 700 teenagers every year – equal to the loss of all the students at an average Canadian high school.
- ◆ Car crashes are the leading cause of death for young people 15-20 years old.

Taking smart risks

Your teens and their friends can take smart risks and avoid injury:

Buckle Up

◆ Wearing a seatbelt can save your teens life. While your teen may wear their seatbelts while you're at the wheel or while they are driving, they may be less likely to do so in the back seat of a friend's car. Make sure your teens always see you wearing your seatbelt, even if it's just to the corner store.

- ◆ Ensure your young riders know an unbuckled helmet that flies off their head won't do them any good in the event of a crash.

Look First

- ◆ Make sure your teen knows how important it is to scope out a situation first. For example, check the water before diving in – is it deep enough? Are there rocks? Many teens have ended up paralyzed after diving into shallow water.
- ◆ Similarly, before your teen skis down a slope or snowboards off a jump, ensure they check out the situation first to see the risks.



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preventing injury with smart thinking

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- ◆ Help your teen to check regularly whether their vehicle's tires are properly inflated, that fluids are topped up and that they keep their eyes on the road and avoid distractions.

Wear the Gear

- ◆ Wearing the gear is one of the most effective routes teens can take to prevent injuries. For example, bike helmets are 85% effective in preventing head injuries to cyclists.

Get Trained

- ◆ Lack of experience leads to many injuries. Ensure your teen gets on-the-job training and knows how to refuse unsafe work.
- ◆ Encourage your teen to get trained and start slowly when participating in new sports or activities. One study found a third of skateboarders who injured their wrists had been skating less than a week.

Drive Sober

- ◆ Driving sober means avoiding alcohol and drugs before driving a car, snowmobiling, participating in a sport or working. Before your teen attends a party, make sure he or she has a back-up plan so they won't have to drive with anyone who has been drinking.
- ◆ Driving sober also means being focused and avoiding distractions. Research has shown, for example that adding several teen passengers to the mix multiplies the chances teens will crash their cars.



About SMARTRISK -

SMARTRISK is a national, charitable organization dedicated to preventing injuries and saving lives by helping people to see the risks in lives through programs it operates across Canada.



For more information
or to donate to SMARTRISK, visit

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