

Talking to Teens About Driving



By Lee Michael Katz

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) nearly one million high school teens drank alcohol and got behind the wheel in 2011. Fortunately, you can reduce the danger of your child becoming a statistic by setting clear rules and engaging in a candid discussion. Here's how to make them aware of the risks of underage drinking and driving.

Get help talking with your teen. Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) offers conversation starters and tips on its website. Liberty Mutual, which has a partnership with SADD, also offers ways to educate your teens, including a Parent/Teen Contract to help establish family driving rules.

Set an example. Drinking and driving is just as illegal for adults as it is for teens. If you have a couple of drinks at dinner, hand the keys to a sober family member or friend. It powerfully reinforces the idea that drinking and driving don't mix.

Never text and drive. Talking on a phone or texting while driving is never advisable. It's also smart to avoid distractions such as MP3 players and GPS units.

Always wear your seatbelt. Seatbelts are a necessity. About half the teens killed in drunk-driving accidents were unbuckled at the time of the crash.

Have an emergency plan. If your teen does drink or is out with someone who consumed alcohol, make it clear that you'll provide a no-strings-attached ride home or pay for a cab.

Get educated. Liberty Mutual has partnered with Adept Driver, to offer their teenSMART driving course, which includes tips on how to better manage the emotions that lead to drunk driving.

