

Many parents multi-task while driving kids

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Many parents are putting their precious cargo at risk while driving, according to survey results that will be presented May 5 and 6 at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) annual meeting in Washington, DC.

Researchers from the University of Michigan surveyed more than 600 parents to find out what distractions they face while [driving](#) with their children, whether they use age-appropriate [child](#) restraints and if they had ever been in a [motor vehicle accident](#).

"Lots of attention has been given to distracted [teen drivers](#). However, our results indicate parents are frequently distracted while driving their 1- to 12-year-old children, and these distracted drivers were more likely to have been in a crash," said lead author Michelle L. Macy, MD, MS, FAAP, clinical lecturer in the Departments of [Emergency Medicine](#) and Pediatrics at University of Michigan and C.S. Mott Children's Hospital.

Parents were surveyed while their children were being treated at one of two Michigan emergency rooms for any reason. Participants were asked how often they engaged in distracting behaviors while driving with their child over the last month. These behaviors included talking on the phone (hands-free or handheld), [texting](#)/surfing the Internet, self-care (grooming, eating) child care (picking up a toy, feeding their child), getting directions (navigation system, map) and changing a CD or DVD.

Parents also were asked whether they use a [seatbelt](#), what type of restraint their child uses and their motivation to use the recommended restraint for their child's size. Demographic information, including race,

education and income, also was collected.

Responses to questions on distracted driving showed the following:

- Almost 90 percent of drivers reported engaging in at least one technology-based distraction while driving their child in the past month, and most drivers reported engaging in four of the 10 [distractions](#) asked about in the study.
- Drivers who reported engaging in distracting behaviors were more likely to report having ever been in a crash.
- Drivers of children who were not restrained in an age-appropriate restraint based on Michigan law (car seat for children ages 1-3, car seat or booster seat for those 4-7 years old, booster seat or seat belt for 8- to 12-year-olds) had 2.5 times higher odds of reporting a child-related distraction than drivers of children who were restrained in accordance with Michigan law.

"Our research has identified some high-impact areas to improve child passenger safety," Dr. Macy said. "Distracted driving while children are in the car is common, and many [children](#) are not using the right [safety seat](#) for their size."

Other findings showed:

- Parents who reported always wearing a seat belt were significantly more likely to report their child always uses the age-appropriate restraint.
- Parents who were motivated "from within" to use a safety seat (agreement with statements such as "It is an important choice I really want to make.") were significantly more likely to report age-appropriate restraint use, while external motivations (for

example: "Others would be upset with me.") were not associated with age-appropriate restraint use.

- Parents of minority race/ethnicity were significantly less likely to report their child always uses the age-appropriate restraint compared with white parents, even after controlling for education, income, child age, motivation to use a safety seat and personal seat belt use.

"It is concerning that, in our study population, race is playing such a prominent role in the use of car seats. The underlying reasons are not fully explained by differences in education or income," Dr. Macy said. "The impact of parental motivation to use car seats also needs to be better understood."

More information: To view the abstract, "Disparities in Child Passenger Safety," which will be presented on May 5, go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...hp?nu=PAS13L1_2190.7. To view the abstract, "Distracted Drivers, at Risk Child Passengers," which will be presented on May 6, go to www.abstracts2view.com/pas/view...hp?nu=PAS13L1_3165.4.

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