

Summer deadliest time of year for teen drivers

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Crashes often linked to distracted driving.

(HealthDay)—Summer is the most dangerous time of the year for teen drivers and distracted driving is often the reason why, experts say.

Seven of the 10 deadliest days for teen drivers occur between Memorial Day and Labor Day, according to a news release from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) and AAA.

In 2011 alone, 10 percent of crashes involving injuries were linked to [driver distraction](#). Moreover, the U.S. [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) (NHTSA) said that 11 percent of all drivers younger than 20 who were involved in a deadly crash were reportedly distracted at the time of the accident.

Sending or receiving texts while driving takes drivers' eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds, according to the U.S. Department of

Transportation. That's the equivalent of driving the length of a football field, blind, at 44 miles per hour, the experts noted in the news release.

Drivers are more than three times more likely to get in a car accident while reaching for something in their car and 23 times more likely to crash while texting, according to NHTSA research.

Due to the prevalence and dangers of [distracted driving](#), the AAOS and AAA have joined forces to sponsor the "Decide to Drive" campaign, which urges [teen drivers](#) to stay focused and keep their hands on the [steering wheel](#) and their eyes on the road.

"Orthopaedic surgeons are the [medical doctors](#) who put bones and limbs back together after [road crashes](#) and trauma," AAOS president Dr. Joshua Jacobs said in the news release. "We want to prevent distracted driving injuries, including those involving young drivers, and keep them and their passengers safe and strong for life."

The Decide to Drive campaign offers teens and adult drivers a "Wreckless Checklist" to help them remember that when they are behind the wheel, nothing is more important than driving.

According to the checklist, drivers should do the following before they even start their car:

- Put on sunglasses, Bluetooth ear pieces and any other needed accessories.
- Adjust seats, headrests, controls and mirrors.
- Put on a seat belt.
- Move all reading materials out of arm's reach.
- Pre-load CDs or mp3 playlists.
- Make sure radio volume doesn't drown out emergency sirens.

- If needed, enter the destination into a navigation system.

"For [young drivers](#)—or any driver for that matter—their first priority is the safe operation of their car or truck, which means eyes on the road and hands on the wheel," Robert Strassburger, vice president of safety at the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, said in the news release.

The checklist also highlights several tips young people should keep in mind while they are driving, including:

- Pull over and stop the car any time distraction occurs, such as reaching for items, having an intense discussion, reading, smoking or disciplining a child.
- Do not eat or drink while driving.
- Stay focused on the road.
- Do not try to multitask and apply makeup, brush hair, polish nails or change clothes while driving.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [safe teen driving](#).

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