

## ADHD and driving risk: the link parents need to know

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Learning to drive and getting a driver's license are exciting milestones for teens. However, having a new driver in the family can be worrisome, especially for parents of teens with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents to talk to new drivers about possible risks of impulsive, distracted and unfocused driving.

Distracted driving comes in many forms: taking your eyes off the road, your hands off the vehicle controls or your mind off the task (driving), the AAP says.

The risk of a crash is 36% higher for teens drivers with ADHD than their peers, no matter their gender, age or driving experience.

Medication can help teens control ADHD symptoms. But the benefit of medication on teen driving is uncertain, according to the AAP. Many factors affect whether ADHD medication might help. These include the time of day, how long ago the teen took medicine and how well it treats symptoms. For example, drivers are more at risk of a crash in the late afternoon and evening. This is also when a teen's ADHD medication might have worn off.

Teens with ADHD might need extra behind-the-wheel training, a longer supervised driving period and medication adjustments. The AAP encourages parents to talk with their pediatrician about these matters before the teen gets his or her license. Other things to ask about are:

- What to expect of teen drivers and limits parents should set.
- Whether your teen would benefit from more supervised driving.
- The harms of drug and alcohol use on teen drivers who take ADHD medication.
- Use of teen-parent driving contracts. Find one at <http://bit.ly/drivingagreement>.
- Use of technology that reports driving data to parents.

Find more teen driving information at <http://bit.ly/AAPteendrivertech>.

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- [AAP News story "Policy describes research, interventions to help teens curb risky driving"](#)

