

August 2016

The Young Driver



Motor vehicle–related injuries to the young adult / young driver group continue to be of paramount importance to our society.

The young, novice driver, lacks the experience and ability to perform many of the complex tasks of ordinary driving. Compared with experienced drivers, the young / novice driver is less proficient in detecting and responding to hazards and controlling the vehicle, especially at higher speeds.

The risk of having a crash during the learner-driver period is low, because the young driver is supervised and is generally not driving in high-risk conditions.

It is normal for young drivers to take chances, succumb to peer pressures, overestimate their abilities, and have emotional mood swings. These behaviours can all place these drivers at greater risk of having motor vehicle crashes. Males seem to be at especially high risk, possibly as a result of social norms and media images that equate fast driving and ability to perform difficult driving manoeuvres as masculine.

Distractions are contributing factors for motor vehicle crashes for both the young, novice driver as well as the more experienced adult driver.

Eating, drinking, and adjusting the radio or the air conditioner each cause more crashes than cell phone use. Cell phone use has been estimated to increase crash rates, and hands-free kits are not associated with significantly less risk.

Contributors to Young, Novice Driver Crashes and Injury

- Lack of driver experience
- Failure to use safety belts
- Inadequate hazard-perception skills
- Distraction (cell phone, food, drink, music)
- Transporting teenaged or young passengers
- Night-time driving
- Speeding and reckless driving
- Fatigue
- Unsafe vehicle choice
- Alcohol use
- Drug or medication use
- Inadequate parental limit setting
- ADHD



Young drivers are encouraged to follow these tips that demonstrate responsibility and maturity and could save a life:

1. Wear a seat belt and remind passengers to buckle up during every ride.
2. When driving, “park” cell phones with a passenger or in the boot of the car.
3. Practice driving on a variety of roads and traffic patterns, at different times of day and in different weather conditions.
4. Scan for road hazards and follow traffic signs.
5. Watch the speed and keep a safe distance between moving vehicles.
6. Call a friend or parent for a ride when feeling tired, upset or following having had an alcoholic beverage.
7. Recognize and avoid distractions inside of the vehicle like carrying too many passengers; adjusting the radio, music player or GPS system; and eating.
8. Limit driving at night.
9. Limit the number of passengers. Only have 1 or 2 passengers in the car until the young, novice drivers have gained more experience.

Important Emergency Numbers

Netcare 911: 082 911 **SAPS: 10111**

Netcare Union Hospital 011 724 2114

Injury.Prevention@netcare.co.za