

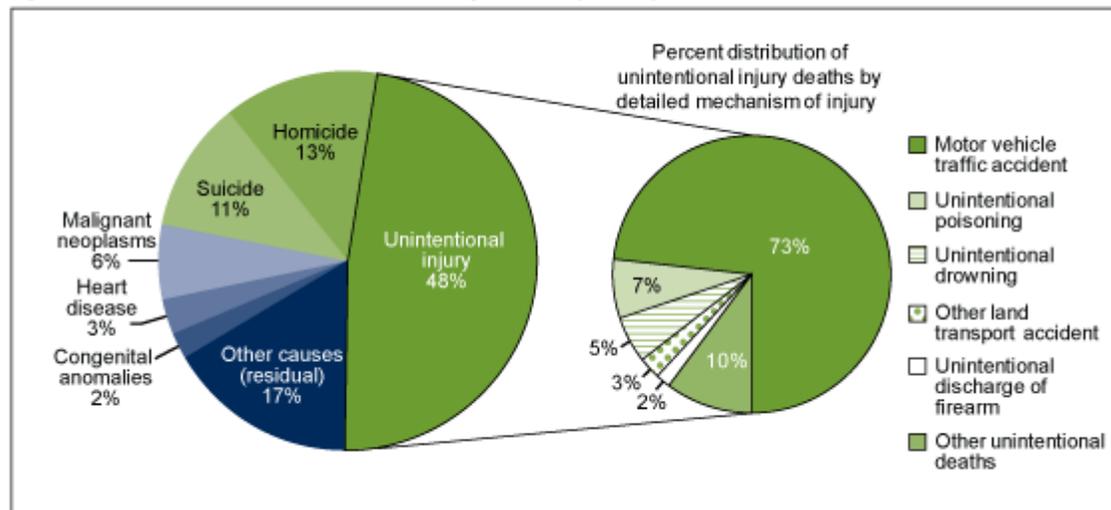
## Teen Safety

Teens often take risks. They think that nothing bad will happen to them. Teens may feel pressure from friends to take risks. Many times they do not think about or understand what could happen if they take risks.

The leading causes of death to teens include:

1. Motor vehicle accidents.
2. Homicide.
3. Suicide.
4. Unintentional poisonings or drug overdose.
5. Other accidents. This includes drowning, injuries from guns, and pedestrian injuries.

Figure 2. Percent distribution of all deaths to teenagers 12–19 years, by cause of death: United States, 1999–2006



SOURCE: National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

### How can I help my teen be safe?

Take time to talk about safety. Share your views and remember what it was like to be a teen. Give your teen credit for being able to make good choices. Be a good safety role model. Wear your seat belt every time you drive your car. Do not drink and drive. Do not talk on the phone or text when driving. Wear a helmet when you ride a bike.

#### Motor vehicles

- Be sure your teen has plenty of driving practice before getting a driver's license.
- Teach your teen never to drive after drinking alcohol. Tell your teen to call home instead of driving drunk or riding with a drunk driver. Be a good role model for sober driving.

- Limit late night driving. Most accidents occur on weekends after dark.
- Teach your teen to always wear seat belts. Insist that all passengers wear seat belts also. Set a positive example by wearing seat belts when you drive.
- Teach your teen to avoid distractions when driving. They should not talk or text on their cell phone. Tell them to pull over when safe to answer their phone or to make a call.

### **Bicycles and pedestrians**

- Stress the need to follow safety rules. When walking or riding a bike, your teen should follow all laws.
- Bicyclists, motorcycle drivers and passengers must wear helmets. Helmets reduce the chance of serious head injuries by 85 percent.
- Be sure the brakes on your teen's bike work properly.
- Have your teen wear bright, light-colored clothing after dark. A bicycle light should also be used. Most fatal accidents occur at dusk and at night because cars cannot see the bicyclist.
- All bikes must have reflectors on the front and rear and on the wheel spokes.
- Use the bike lane, if it is available.

### **Guns**

- Think about having a gun-free household. If this is not possible, limit access to firearms. Keep guns unloaded and safely locked away.
- Put a trigger lock on each gun and keep it safely locked.
- If guns are used for hunting or target shooting, be sure your teen is trained on how to handle, clean and store the gun. An adult should supervise your teen when hunting or target shooting.
- Insist that guns never be used as a toy or in games.
- When your teen visits the home of a friend, ask that family if they keep firearms in their home.
- Do not ignore your teen's anger, rage or thoughts of suicide.
- Make it clear to your teen that explosives and firecrackers are off limits.

### **Water-related injuries or drowning**

- Be sure your teen knows how to swim.
- Teach your teen to avoid swimming, fishing or boating in rivers, canals or ravines in early spring or after heavy rains. The water is high and moving fast in spring which makes it very dangerous.
- Make it clear that drinking alcohol or taking drugs and doing water activities do not mix.
- Never let your teen be on a frozen pond or lake in the winter to snowmobile, ice skate, play hockey or do ice fishing without adult supervision. Many drownings occur in winter months when people fall through the ice.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

### **Alcohol and drug related injuries and deaths**

- Always model responsible use of alcohol in your home and around your teen. Never leave your home unsupervised where teens could have access to your liquor.

- Don't let your medicine cabinet be the neighbor dealer. Lock up or get rid of all controlled substances, including those for; ADHD, pain, anxiety and muscle relaxers.
- Monitor your teen's behavior and note any changes in behavior, school performance or peer groups. See your pediatrician early for any concerns.
- Pay attention to distinct odors, appearance of eyes and behavior when returns home
- If suspicious, keep aware for signs of drug use and paraphernalia; eye drops, incense/air fresheners, lighters, foil, bent spoons and other unusual objects in their rooms and car.
- Discuss any concerns with your teen. Many teens will begin experimenting with drugs and alcohol to cover up symptoms of depression or anxiety or problems with peers. If on-going issues, intervene early and discuss with your teens pediatrician for referral to substance use counselor and possible therapist.

### **Sport-related injuries**

- Minor injuries are a natural part of sports. However, an athletic trainer or doctor should be seen for injuries such as head injuries, sprains and strains. Do not hesitate to seek medical help or advice. Never continue to play after a head injury, especially if followed by headache, vision problems, nausea, dizziness, loss of consciousness or other signs of concussion.
- Be sure your teen has regular physical exams. High-schoolers should have an exam every year.
- Make your teen responsible for safety. Teach them to set limits for physical risk-taking. Tell them not to "play through an injury." They should not try to do a dangerous maneuver, even when told to do so by a coach or a peer.

### **What should I do in an emergency?**

Have a plan for what you will do if your teen needs emergency help. Write down emergency information and hang a copy near every phone in your home. Include the following:

- **Fire department phone number.** In case of fire ("911").
- **Rescue squad phone number.** In case of injury, illness or if your teen needs CPR ("911").
- **Poison center phone number.** In case your teen eats or is in contact with something that is dangerous. The Poison Center's toll-free number at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin is 1-800-222-1222.
- **Your name, address and phone number.**
- **Directions to your house.**

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**