

## Summer Safety Tips for Young Adults

Now that prom season is upon us and summer vacation is just around the corner, young people will be on the roads, on the sidewalks, and at any number of recreational areas. As much as high school and college students look forward to their upcoming break, they need to be reminded of safety hazards and precautions specific to this time of year.

For the older students, summertime usually involves driving, whether to a summer job or for entertainment. While no one plans to be in a crash, accidents do happen. In fact, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for 16-18 year olds. In a 35 mph crash, the forces are similar to those resulting from jumping head first off a 3 story building for the driver and the front seat passenger. Rear seat passengers can be thrown with that same force against the front seat, causing serious injury and even death to both the passengers in the front and the back seats. That is why it is so important that **all** passengers in a motor vehicle buckle their seat belt and use the restraint system properly. Last year alone, nearly 5000 16-18 year olds were killed or seriously injured in accidents—2/3 of them were not wearing seat belts.

Another safety issue for teens, especially older ones, is that of alcohol, by itself or in combination with driving. Alcohol use is a confirmed problem for 3 million young people between the ages of 14-17. More than ½ of the nation's middle and high school students drink alcoholic beverages. And more than 40% of all 16-20 year old deaths result from alcohol-related crashes. Alcohol can also lead to death when mixed with drugs and medications, and drinking large amounts of alcohol can cause alcohol poisoning leading to coma and even death. It adversely affects self-control, judgment, every organ in your body, and your mind, making schoolwork and jobs difficult to perform.

Water safety is another concern for young people during the warm weather. Swimming, boating, jet skiing, and water skiing are some of the activities associated with summer, and pose special hazards to teens. The highest drowning rates within any age group are found among teens and young adults; in the United States, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death among teens, and is especially prevalent among males. When alcohol use is added to the picture, the combination of water activities and alcohol accounts for 25-50% of adolescent deaths from water recreation. Alcohol is a contributing factor in up to 50% of adolescent boy drownings. Some tips to keep in mind to reduce the risk of drowning are

1. Never use alcohol while swimming, boating, or engaging in other water recreational activities.
2. Think about how well you swim and how tired you are before entering the water.
3. Check the water temperature, and avoid swimming or boating in high-running or swiftly moving waters.
4. Wear a life jacket, especially when boating.
5. Swim only at beaches that are monitored by a life guard, never swim alone, and stay close to the shore.

Young adults and teens of all ages enjoy riding bicycles, skateboards, inline skates, and scooters. Every year, approximately 26,000 people are treated in hospital emergency departments for

skateboard related injuries, over 40,500 for scooter related injuries, 100,000 for inline skating injuries, and over 550,000 for bicycle injuries. No matter which of these forms of transportation is used, the single best protective measure is the use of an approved, properly fitting helmet. Knee, elbow, and wrist pads are also effective in preventing broken bones. Wearing clothing that can be seen, obeying traffic rules, and making sure the equipment is in good condition can further reduce the risk of injury.

Also during the summer, many young people work in retail or just like to visit the shopping malls. With no school to worry about the next day, many will stay until closing time. And of course, a trip to the ATM may be required before getting to the mall. When going out anywhere, especially at night, it is a good idea to practice the following safety measures:

1. 1. When leaving an ATM or store, do not display cash openly.
2. 2. Park only in well-lighted areas, near other vehicles. Close all windows, lock the doors, and keep all valuables out of sight.
3. 3. Avoid walking alone.
4. 4. Carry a purse close to your body, do not let it swing loosely.
5. 5. Walk with confidence, keeping an eye on the people in front and in back of you. Do not talk to strangers.
6. Approach your vehicle with your keys in hand, and try to avoid carrying too many packages.
7. If followed, go immediately to an area with lights and people. Contact security or the police.

Summer should be a time for fun and relaxation, especially for young people. By exercising caution and common sense, it can be a safe time as well. For additional information on summer safety, contact the Central Connecticut Health District at 721-2822.