

Teens with ADHD and Driving Safety

Compiled by Karen Sampson Hoffman, MA

Driver Safety When Coping with ADHD Symptoms



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Teens with ADHD may have up to a five-year delay in their maturity. If this is so, should young people wait until they are eighteen or nineteen before learning to drive or taking their driver's license exam?

I think that's an excellent idea. My younger son took the car out and he totaled it. He wasn't taking his med-

ication and this use of the car was without parental approval. The judge told him, "The penalty will be to delay your driver's license for six months." I said to the judge, "Let's extend that for two years," and the judge agreed. If you can get by with it, I think it's a great idea.

Do you have any advice on how to emphasize to a teenager that a distraction is a distraction, whether it's eating, talking on a phone, or having friends in the car?

In our study with video cameras, we documented eight collisions, one of which was caused by eating a hamburger. When mustard dropped onto the driver's lap, he tried to wipe it up and then crashed.

You're right—a distraction is a distraction, and they're all dangerous. Distracted driving is certainly a problem. I don't know how to emphasize it enough.

With today's technology, there are many ways to disable a cell phone while driving—from devices that hang on the keychain to apps you can download onto the phone itself.

As a parent, how and when should you talk with your teen about respecting the vehicle?

Keep in mind the developmental process of driving. When these teens have a learner's permit, that's when they'll listen to you. Once they have their driver's license, they think they know how to drive and they're less receptive to information. The best time to talk to them is the narrow window between the learner's permit and the full license. If you can get them to acknowledge the natural contingencies of ADHD and attention, then that works best. 🗣️

Karen Sampson Hoffman, MA, is the coordinator of the NRC's Ask the Expert webinar series.

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MORE INFO: Want to hear the entire *ADHD & Driving: Driver Safety when Coping with ADHD Symptoms* webinar? Visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqhOesY5e78>.