

# START SMART...

*The keys to safe  
teen driving*



## 6 Teens and Drowsy Driving

### **Characteristics of drowsy driving crashes:**

- ✓ *Single vehicle crashes.*
- ✓ *Driving alone.*
- ✓ *Drifting off the road.*
- ✓ *Nighttime crashes.*
- ✓ *High injury and death rates.*

### **Is drowsy driving a problem?**

Sleep deprivation leads to drowsiness, which is dangerous when it happens to the driver of a motor vehicle. This problem contributes to 100,000 motor vehicle crashes each year. People at high risk for drowsiness-related crashes include shift workers, business travelers, commercial drivers, people with sleep disorders, and young people. In fact, two-thirds of drivers involved in these crashes are under age 30!

### **Why are young drivers at high risk for drowsiness-related crashes?**

Because teens:

- ✓ *Are inexperienced drivers.*
- ✓ *Need more sleep than adults, but may actually get less, due to the demands of school, extracurricular activities, work, and developmental changes.*

- ✓ *Drive during the times when they could be most sleepy—at night, early in the morning, or during mid-afternoon.*

### **Teenagers are susceptible to “sleep debt.”**

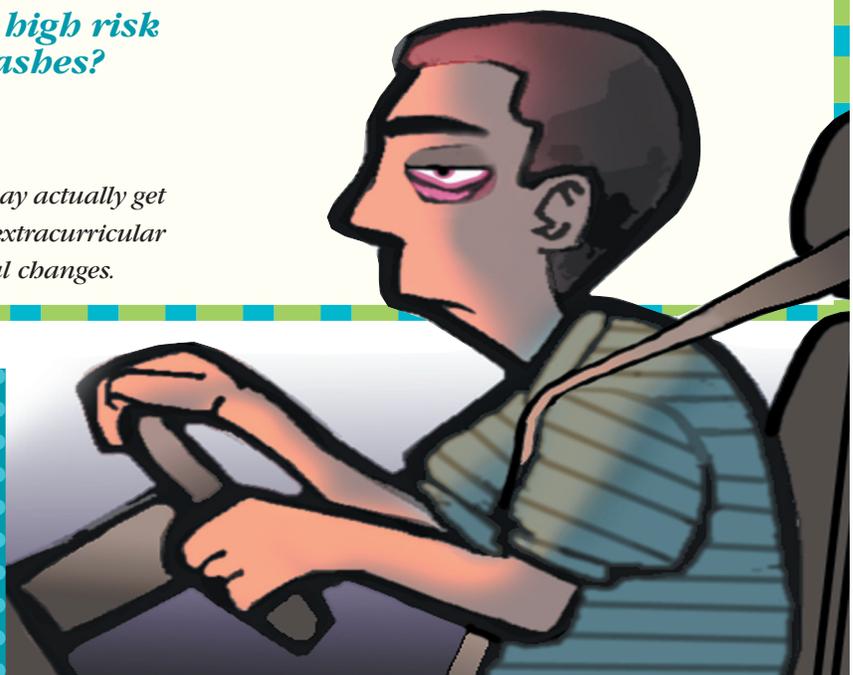
Many teens have irregular sleep patterns and sleep more on the weekends than during the week. While most teens need 9 to 10 hours of sleep each night to be rested and support the body’s development, many do not get it. An hour or more of sleep missed each night creates a sleep debt. Sleeping more on the weekends can not make up for sleep lost during the week.

### **What can parents do?**

Help your teen organize time. Tell your teen that you expect her/him to be responsible and not risk a crash or injury by driving when s/he is drowsy.

### **Parents agree!**

Safety first—your teen should not drive while drowsy to protect her/him from unnecessary risk.





## AAA StartSmart Experiences

*“I was so tired that I couldn’t keep my eyes open, and I constantly had to correct my steering in order to stay on the road. I was really glad to get home.”—17-year-old Curtis*

*“My schedule is so busy that I don’t get much sleep. Usually I am fine except when I drive to school in the mornings. I am always surprised I make it there without falling asleep.”—Alison, a 17-year-old junior*

*“We went out Friday night and stayed out pretty late. I woke up really early that day, and by the time we were ready to leave the party, I was so tired! I decided to just crash at my friend’s house and drive home the next morning.”—16-year-old Dante*

**Get  
enough sleep  
and drive wide  
awake!**



## StartSmart comments...

Teenagers and parents should recognize the importance of a good night’s rest. Parents should help their teens organize their time so that sleeping does not suffer due to school and after-school activities. Especially, be ready to take steps to make sure teens are not driving when they are sleepy. It’s deadly!

### **BOTTOM LINE**

*Recognize the importance of a good night’s sleep.*

- ✓ *Take short naps during the day when needed.*
- ✓ *Avoid caffeine and vigorous exercise for several hours before going to bed.*
- ✓ *Have a regular bedtime.*

***Avoid driving when you are sleepy!***