



# Helping Hand

Sponsored by: *The Glen Ridge Municipal Alliance Committee* Volume 19 Issue Three

## Keeping Young Drivers Crash-Free

A recent national survey conducted by The Allstate Foundation shows that while parents know the No. 1 killer of teens is car crashes caused by teen drivers, the majority of parents do not understand the main causes of these crashes or may not be aware of laws that are intended to protect their teens. The survey also found that although parents agree they must play a significant role in preparing their teens to drive, many parents still delay safe driving conversations with their teens until shortly before licensure; think their teens are immune to the risk of car crashes; allow their teens to drive or ride in dangerous conditions; and model unsafe behavior behind the wheel.

According to the survey, nearly 50% of parents polled think crashes involving teens result from drunken driving. In reality, the majority of crashes are caused by driver error, speeding, and driving with distractions.

Additionally, while most parents surveyed feel prepared to teach their teens the rules of the road, 60% say they have never heard of or are only vaguely aware of graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws. Intended to protect novice drivers while they are learning, typical provisions of GDL laws include an extended supervised driving period and restrictions on late-night driving and driving with teen passengers during the initial months of licensure.

### **Parenting Strategies for Keeping Young Drivers Safe:**

- [Talk with your child early and often.](#) Most parents do not talk to their teens about safe driving until a year or less before their teens receive a permit—long after children’s attitudes toward driving have developed.
- [Shake the “not MY teen” syndrome.](#) Parents think their own teens are immune to the risk of a crash— when in reality, the issue affects all driving teens.
- [Restrict dangerous driving situations.](#) Many parents allow their teens to drive in dangerous situations within the first few months after getting a license, increasing the likelihood of a deadly crash.
- [Practice what you preach.](#) Parents are not modeling good behavior behind the wheel when their children are in the car.

- [Exert positive adult peer pressure](#). Parents are influenced by several factors—especially other parents.

*For more information on how parents can talk to their teens and other parents about this issue or to view the full Allstate*

*Foundation parent survey, visit [www.ProtectTeenDrivers.com](http://www.ProtectTeenDrivers.com)*

## Grandparents Who ‘Rock’

If your grandchild says to you, “You rock,” that’s a compliment. “You’re cool” is another compliment. Of course, depending on where you live, the exact words may be different.

Getting the lingo straight is just one of the many challenges in an increasingly intergenerational world. The grandparent/grandchild relationship is second in emotional importance only to the parent/child relationship. But the world has changed for grandparents.

Today’s grandparents grew up without child safety seats, bicycle helmets, and smoke alarms. They need to get up-to-date about safety, learn how to childproof their homes, and learn to put babies to sleep on their backs instead of tummies.

Parents can help grandparents by sharing with them the latest health and safety guidelines. Grandparents can and should also ask for guidance from the parents.

Thanks to the Internet, grandparents have access to many resources. They can also build and maintain long-distance relationships with their grandchildren by communicating via e-mail.

### Tips to Connect With Grandchildren:

- Tune into your grandchild. Listen carefully with your eyes and ears.
- Share her world. Get to know her words and ways, likes and dislikes.
- Let him teach you about something he has learned. He will feel important and respected.

*For more information, visit: [www.family.samhsa.gov/monitor/grandparentscool.aspx?](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/monitor/grandparentscool.aspx?)*

## ‘Playing’ It Safe

Safe playground equipment and adult supervision are extremely important, but they are only half of the equation: kids must know how to be safe and act responsibly at the playground. Here are some rules to teach children:

- Never push or roughhouse while on playground equipment.
- Use equipment properly—slide feet first, don’t climb outside guardrails, no standing on swings, etc.
- Before jumping off equipment, make sure that there are no other children in the way.
- Leave bikes, backpacks, and bags away from the equipment so that no one trips over them and falls.
- Playground equipment should never be used if it is wet, because moisture causes the surface to be slippery.
- During the summertime, playground equipment can become uncomfortably or even dangerously hot, especially metal slides.
- Do not wear clothes with drawstrings or other strings while at the playground.
- Wear sunscreen when playing outside, even on cloudy days.

*For more information, visit: [www.kidshealth.org/parent/fitness/safety/playground.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/fitness/safety/playground.html)*

# Self-Cutters: Signs and What Parents Should and Should Not Do

Young people who have trouble modulating emotional states—especially sadness, fear and anger—are at higher risk for self-injury. Some signs to look out for are:

- Unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Low self-esteem as evidenced by a tendency to put oneself down.
- Arms and legs are always covered—such as wearing cold weather clothes in warm weather.
- Presence of an eating disorder and possible substance abuse.

If parents discover that a child is self-injuring, their reaction is very important. **Parents should NOT:**

- react with intensity (e.g., fear or anger).
- use threats and rewards, as they are rarely effective.
- ask “Why are you doing this to me?” or “Why did you do that?”
- believe the myth that only girls self-injure.

**But parents SHOULD:**

- speak with your child calmly, without being judgmental, while expressing your love and concern.
- listen without offering an opinion.
- offer to educate themselves on self-injury so they can understand the child’s situation.
- tell your child you are concerned about him/her and that he/she can talk to you about anything.

For more information, visit: [www.selfinjury.com/](http://www.selfinjury.com/)

# New Tobacco Products Cloud Picture

Fewer teens are smoking cigarettes, but new tobacco products are clouding this picture. Tobacco companies say fruit- and mint flavored cigarettes are aimed at getting adult smokers to switch brands. However, these products have sparked claims that tobacco makers are also targeting youth. While the debate goes on, parents can help guard their children against the allure of sweet flavors and slick marketing.

Flavored cigarettes and flavored smokeless tobacco recently began appearing in stores. These products come in a range of flavors.

Advertised as paths to parties, pleasure, independence, or new experiences, these products highlight themes that may appeal to youth. Whatever the intent behind the marketing of flavored tobacco products, all too often they will end up in the hands— and mouths—of youths.

At home, watch for signs that your child is using tobacco, flavored or not. Be prepared to remind your child that flavored tobacco is every bit as harmful as regular tobacco.

Flavored tobacco can be tempting for youths looking for something new. While smoking among young people has fallen, flavored tobacco products show that it is too soon to breathe easily.

For more information, visit: [www.family.samhsa.gov/monitor/flavcig.aspx?](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/monitor/flavcig.aspx?)

# 'Pass the Memories'

For many families, eating dinner together has become a lost art—but it proves to be a simple, effective way to reduce the risk of youth substance abuse and to raise healthier children. Before family dinners go the way of the dinosaur, make the effort to preserve family mealtime.

The facts are on the table: eating dinner together every night keeps communication open. It is the perfect time and place to reconnect and to show your kids that they are your No. 1 priority. It can help you direct your children toward positive activities and behavior, reducing the likelihood that they will get involved with alcohol, tobacco, and/or illegal drugs.

## **Why Are Family Mealtimes Important?**

- By eating with your children, it is more likely that meals will be healthier and more balanced.
- Compared to teens that have frequent family dinners, those who rarely have family dinners are three and a half times more likely to have abused prescription drugs or an illegal drug other than marijuana.
- Girls who have five or more meals a week with their families are one-third less likely to develop unhealthy eating habits.

## **What Should We Talk About?**

- Ask everyone to share his or her favorite part or biggest challenge of the day.
- Plan and then let the children pick tasks for the next day's menu.
- Exchange memories about your favorite family pastimes.
- Discuss an activity the family can do together and then put it on the calendar.
- Talk with your children about a book they are reading or a movie they have seen.
- Ask the children about their classes, homework, teachers, and upcoming assignments.

For more information, visit: [www.family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx?](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/get/mealtime.aspx?)

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