

## What parents can do

As parents, you can help your teens get the rest they need:

- Build time-management skills. Encourage teens to see how long tasks will take and plan realistically to complete school assignments. Get them to start early and not procrastinate. Then they won't have to burn the midnight oil and they can enjoy a good night's rest.
- Establish a reasonable bedtime and try to stick to it.
- We suggest creating a routine that slows down their pace before going to sleep. The Mayo Clinic suggests a bath or shower, a book, relaxing activities, and for 30 minutes before lights out, no loud music, video games, phone calls or Internet use.
- Eliminate caffeine drinks in the evening.
- Complete exercise or sports practice well before bedtime.
- Determine if any medications are affecting their sleep.
- Be aware of your teen's driving habits – don't let them get behind the wheel if you know they are not rested.

GEICO offers an online library of information to help keep teens safe on the road. Please go to [www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety-library/](http://www.geico.com/information/autosafety/safety-library/) to download and order materials.

\*National Sleep Foundation resource



# Is Your Teen Too Sleepy to Drive?



# Teen Drivers Need a Full Tank of Z-Z-Z-Z-Zs

Teen drivers have the highest crash rates in the country. They also are likely to have the least sleep. GEICO (geico.com) agrees with a growing number of sources that teen crash rates could be reduced by a good night's sleep.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) tracks vehicle fatalities and found that more than 5,100 teens ages 13-19 died in motor vehicle crashes in 2006. More detailed research also indicates that "drowsy driving" is a significant problem that increases the risk of a crash or near-crash, and young drivers are particularly vulnerable since they operate most of the time on much less sleep than they need.



## A nation of sleepy teenagers

Two critical factors\* collide when teens are in their early driving years:

- they need nearly 9.5 hours of sleep every night to accommodate an upswing in growth and hormone development, and
- they get far less sleep than they need – an average of 7.4 hours a night and considerably less for many.

Making the problem worse, teens' biological clocks are set so that they tend to fall asleep later at night and wake up later in the morning, a schedule which is impossible to follow due to early morning school starts for most teens. Parents with teen drivers should observe their teen's sleep habits and work on getting their teens more sleep.

## Teens must have more sleep to:

- stay alert
- make sound judgments
- maintain clear thinking and quick reflexes while driving

It's important for both parents and teens to recognize the signs of fatigue and rework daily schedules to allow for healthier sleep cycles. It won't be easy. Teens have a lot to keep them up on school nights: studies, anxiety over grades, after-school sports and social activities that delay study time, relationship issues, over-stimulation from media sources such as Facebook and MySpace, computer games and an overload of cell phone use and text messaging. These factors could lead to *sleep deprivation*.

Your teen may be sleep deprived if he or she:

- can't wake up in the morning
- is irritable late in the day
- falls asleep spontaneously throughout the day
- sleeps for long periods of time on weekends