

## About Shriners Hospitals for Children

Shriners Hospitals for Children is a health care system of 22 facilities dedicated to improving the lives of children by providing pediatric specialty care, innovative research, and outstanding teaching programs for medical professionals. Children up to age 18 with orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate are eligible for care and receive all services in a family-centered environment, regardless of the families' ability to pay.



**Shriners Hospitals**  
for Children®



## About Shriners Hospitals for Children SCI Programs

Shriners Hospitals for Children opened the country's first pediatric spinal cord injury rehabilitation program in 1980 at the health care system's Philadelphia hospital. Similar programs began a few years later at the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Chicago and Sacramento, Calif. Shriners Hospitals for Children continues to be recognized worldwide as a leader in pediatric spinal cord injury rehabilitation and management.



## Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Begins with Awareness

### Safety Tips for Young Drivers

#### Shriners International Headquarters

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[www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org](http://www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org)

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Motor vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death for those between the ages of 16 and 24. Nearly 6,000 teens die and more than 325,000 are seriously injured in traffic accidents each year. Approximately one in five new teenage drivers will be involved in a crash within the first year of becoming a licensed driver. Motor vehicle crashes are also the leading cause of spinal cord injuries in all age groups. Improving driving skills, especially for young drivers may be the key to fewer deaths and injuries.

### Factors that contribute to motor vehicle crashes include:

- Driver inexperience
- Distractions
- Speeding
- Peer pressure
- Driving with other teens in the car
- Use of alcohol and illegal drugs.

Shriners Hospitals for Children is committed to raising awareness to help prevent spinal cord injuries. Being aware of the risk factors that typically cause a spinal cord injury may lessen the likelihood of these incidents occurring.

### Tips for Safe Driving

- Give driving your full attention. Driving is a privilege.
- Follow the rules of the road and obey speed limits.
- Always wear a seat belt.
- If transporting younger passengers, properly restrain children under age 12 in the back seat, and place children in age and height and weight-appropriate safety or booster seats.
- Avoid distractions unrelated to driving.

### Distractions Include:

- Texting or reading
- Talking on the phone — including using a headset, earpiece or speaker phone
- Eating
- Fatigue
- Arguing
- An animal that is loose in the car
- Disruptive passengers
- Alcohol or other drugs
- Loud music



- Never get behind the wheel after drinking alcohol. Even a single drink, whether you can feel it or not, can affect your judgement enough to cause a crash.
- Be aware of the side-effects of prescription medications before driving.
- Use your side and rear-view mirrors every five to seven seconds. Seeing who is coming up behind you, or who might not be paying attention, could save your life.
- Never write, read or send text messages while driving. Thousands of fatal accidents have been linked to distractions like texting.
- Always have a *safety zone or safety hole*: a space to your left or right to drive into during an emergency. *Your safety zone can also be the cushion of space in front of your vehicle* when a tailgater follows too closely.
- Scan the space you are driving in by moving your eyes left and right to get a sense of your surroundings. Use your mirrors frequently.
- Respect the speed limits — especially in school and work zones.
- Keep your eyes up. Look as far ahead as you can see. Do not focus only on the vehicle in front of you. Scan your surroundings.

### Online Resources

- [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)
- [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)
- [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
- [www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org](http://www.shrinershospitalsforchildren.org)