

# Health eNews



## Suggested Checkups and Tests for Men

**Screening tests can help men stay healthy. Find out which tests you need based on age, health and risks for other health problems.**

**This checklist is meant only as a general guideline. The tests and screenings you need depend on your individual risks, medical and genetic histories, and age. Talk with your doctor to know what you need to do to keep up your health. Your doctor can also tell you how often you should have these tests and screenings.**

Many doctors follow the guidelines put forth by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The USPSTF is the nation's leading source of recommendations and guidelines for screening tests. Doctors also follow other recommendations, like those made by the American Cancer Society or other professional organizations.

**Regular checkups.** Regular checkups are a good way to keep track of your health. Your doctor can take your blood pressure, listen to your heart, weigh you and take other assessments. Sometimes, conditions that do not have noticeable symptoms, like high blood pressure, are found at a routine checkup. This is also a good time to get advice from your doctor about your diet, exercise and other steps to take. There is no consensus as to when or how often a man should go for a routine physical. Talk to your doctor about suggestions for what is right for you.

**Testicular exams.** The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends a testicular exam as part of a routine cancer-related office visit. But checking yourself for testicular cancer (testicular self-exams) has not been shown to help men live longer. The ACS does not recommend testicular self-exams for all men. They do advise men who have cancer risk factors to consider a monthly testicular self-exam and to discuss this with their doctors. The USPSTF does not advise screening teens or adult men for testicular cancer if they do not have symptoms. Talk to your doctor about what is best for you.

**Cholesterol testing.** The National Cholesterol Education Program currently recommends a fasting lipoprotein profile for all adults age 20 and older every five years. This test measures total cholesterol, HDL, LDL and triglycerides. Depending on your risk factors for heart disease, your doctor may suggest more frequent testing.

**Prostate cancer screening.** Doctors disagree about whether routine prostate cancer screening should be done. The reason is that very small slow-growing prostate cancers may not cause a man any health problems, while treating those cancers with surgery or radiation could. Here are two different guidelines. Talk to your doctor about them and what is best for you.

The USPSTF does not advise for or against routine screening in men younger than age 75. The USPSTF concludes that there is currently not enough information to make a recommendation regarding screening. However, they do advise against screening men who are aged 75 and older.



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The American Cancer Society recommends that doctors discuss the risks and benefits of prostate cancer screening with their patients. They also suggest prostate cancer screening for most men starting at age 50 and then yearly for men who do not have major medical problems and have a life expectancy of at least 10 years. Prostate screening includes both a PSA test and digital rectal exam (DRE). Yearly screening should start at age 45 for men who have a high risk for prostate cancer, including African Americans or men who have two or more first-degree relatives with prostate cancer. ACS also suggests that doctors talk about screening and offer screening to certain men who are at very high risk at age 40.

**Colon cancer exams.** The USPSTF recommends that everyone be screened for colon cancer starting at age 50 and continuing until age 75 with one of the following screening tests:

- Home fecal occult blood testing
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy

The American Cancer Society guidelines also include several other tests that may be used to screen for colon cancer in some cases. These include:

- A double contrast barium enema
- CT colonography (virtual colonoscopy)
- Stool DNA test

If any of these tests are positive, your doctor may advise further testing with a colonoscopy.

If you have risk factors for colon cancer such as a family history, you may need earlier or more frequent screenings. Other risk factors include a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease, the presence of certain polyps, certain cancers or radiation therapy.

Talk to your doctor to see which screening test is right for you.

**Blood pressure.** Experts do not agree on how often blood pressure should be checked. But it's probably a good idea to have your blood pressure checked at least once every two years. Talk to your doctor if your blood pressure is 120/80 or higher. If you have prehypertension or high blood pressure, your doctor may suggest more frequent screenings, periodic office visits and perhaps regular blood pressure monitoring at home as well.

**Aortic aneurysm.** The USPSTF recommends screening for aortic aneurysm if you have ever smoked. This is a one-time test done by ultrasound between the ages of 65 to 75.

**HIV testing.** The CDC recommends that men get tested for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the virus that causes AIDS, if:

- You are a man who has had sex with other men (after 1975). Get tested at least once a year.
- You inject illegal drugs. Get tested once a year.



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Even if you think you have low risk for HIV infection, talk to your doctor about HIV screening.

**Diabetes testing.** The USPSTF recommends that adults with no symptoms but who have BP readings (either treated or untreated) of greater than 135/80 be tested for diabetes. The American Diabetes Association's recommended testing intervals vary slightly. They suggest testing for all people who are overweight or obese and who have any other risk factors for diabetes. Testing in people who do not have these risk factors should start at age 45.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include being overweight, being inactive and having a family history of diabetes. Also, if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, it is important to be tested for diabetes, because diabetes significantly raises your already higher risk of heart attack.

**Obesity.** You should be screened for obesity by measuring body mass index (BMI), waist circumference or both.

**Dental checkups.** Regular checkups with your dentist are important for dental health and even your overall health. Ask your dentist how often you should have checkups. Two visits per year for cleaning are typically advised.

**Eye exam.** The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that after an initial comprehensive eye exam, you have your eyes checked every one to four years after age 40. Of course, this depends on your age and whether you have any health problems that could affect your eyesight. People with diabetes, diagnosed eye disorders and other medical conditions may need more frequent testing.

**Skin exams.** Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the U.S. But most kinds of skin cancer can be cured if found and treated early. If you notice any new or changing moles or other marks on your skin or have a sore that does not heal, see your doctor right away.

## Why Do Men Skip Health Tests?

**Women live 5.1 years longer on average than men. Could the male tendency to avoid doctors have anything to do with it?**

Former president Bill Clinton admitted he ignored his chest pain for several months. He had also stopped taking a drug his doctor prescribed to lower his cholesterol. But extreme symptoms finally got him to a doctor - who rushed him into heart surgery.

Women across America sighed knowingly: Why is it many men won't follow medical advice or go to see a doctor before a crisis?

### **The difference between men and women**

It's a fact that women are quicker to see a doctor when they develop symptoms. In contrast, men are more likely to ignore



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symptoms and hope they go away. Often, by the time a man sees a doctor, his symptoms may be severe and harder to manage or treat.

Men are 24 percent less likely than women to have visited a doctor in the past year, according to recent U.S. government statistics. For an African American or Hispanic male, the odds of having seen a doctor are even lower. Ditto for men ages 18 to 44.

Women live 5.1 years longer on average than men. Could men's avoidance of doctors and routine checkups have anything to do with that?

Not seeing a doctor regularly means that you lose out on important health screenings or early diagnosis. You can feel fine, but still have conditions, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure, that need treatment. Men may also miss out on preventive care. They are a lot more likely than women to need hospital care for preventable illnesses (pneumonia, for example) or disease complications from diabetes or heart failure.

## **Is seeing a doctor like asking for directions?**

The rap on men is that they don't ask for directions when lost. Perhaps they think they don't need a doctor's help either?

Men's attitudes about physicals may have come from their own fathers who avoided doctors. And some boys grew up with the message that expressing pain or sickness was a sign of weakness.

According to more than 1,000 men taking part in a 2007 survey commissioned by the American Academy of Family Physicians:

- Thirty-six percent said they see a doctor only when "extremely sick."
- Fifty-five percent did not have a routine physical in the last year.
- Almost one in five, age 55 and older, had not been screened for colon cancer.

Men also tend to be less willing than women to discuss their health. Women may talk freely about breast lumps, depression, or urinary problems to a friend or a doctor. For some men, talking to a doctor or spouse may be embarrassing if the subject involves their genitals, bowels, or mental health.

## **Men's health is women's work**

Women are usually the gatekeepers of health in the family. They are often the ones who make medical appointments for other family members. Many men will not see a doctor unless prodded by the women in their life.

If you're a man, you can learn from women that getting suggested screenings and checkups can lead to a longer, healthier life. Early detection and treatment of cholesterol and blood pressure problems can prevent a heart attack or stroke. Detecting a tumor before it has spread can make the difference in whether or not a cancer is treatable.

If you are a woman with a man in your life, keep nudging your guy to exercise (with his doctor's OK), eat nutritiously, and seek appropriate medical care for his age and family history. In the AAFP survey, 80 percent of men with wives or girlfriends said their partner helped convince them to see a doctor. Being accused of nagging in this case is a small price to pay for possibly saving a loved one's life.



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## Basic Facts About Prostate Cancer

### **It is the second most common cancer among men.**

It is estimated that 234,000 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year. That makes prostate cancer the most common cancer among American men, except for skin cancer. More than 27,000 deaths due to prostate cancer are expected to occur this year.

The good news is that the outlook for men diagnosed with prostate cancer is better than ever. More than half of all prostate cancers are found early, while the tumor is still localized, and the five-year survival rate for these men is 99 percent.

### **What is the prostate gland, and what does it do?**

The prostate is a gland about the size of a walnut that is situated below the urinary bladder and in front of the rectum. The urethra (a long tube that carries urine out of the body) passes through the prostate.

The prostate gland produces a fluid that serves as the vehicle for sperm. Although there will be implications if the prostate gland is removed, it is not an essential organ and the body can function without it.

### **Are all prostate tumors cancerous?**

Many men, especially as they age, are affected by an overgrowth of prostate tissue. At times, this tissue overgrowth is benign, meaning that the cells do not contain cancer. This prostate condition is called benign prostatic hypertrophy, or BPH. Other times, abnormal cancerous cells characterize the overgrowth of tissue, and this is referred to as a malignancy or cancer of the prostate.

## Fireworks: Look but Do Not Touch

If you are thinking about do-it-yourself fireworks, let that idea fizzle out. Fireworks, sparklers and many other Fourth of July power poppers can be dangerous, even deadly.

Each year, more than 10,000 people are treated in emergency rooms for fireworks-related injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Of those, about 2,000 are eye injuries. Many of these result in permanent eye damage and vision loss or blindness.

Even though certain kinds of fireworks are legal in many areas, they can still be dangerous. Sparklers, which are readily sold



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across the country, cause many injuries every year. They can burn as hot as 1,800 degrees F, six times as hot as a pan of cooking oil.

Experts warn not to buy or use home fireworks displays, because there is no way they can be safe. They recommend that people go to a public display where professionals or the fire department set off the fireworks. Setting off home fireworks is a gamble, and your child's safety is in jeopardy.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that fireworks should not be offered for sale to the public. Although lighting fireworks, including roman candles and sparklers, is a tradition in many families, this group of children's doctors recommends that parents find new ways to celebrate holidays.

Also remember that local fire departments restrict the use of fireworks. They are not allowed in many states or in fire-prone areas.

## First Aid for Burns

If you've burned yourself, proper first aid can help prevent infection and promote healing. Treatment depends on how severe the burn is.

**First-degree burn.** Only the outer layer of skin is burned. Skin is red and tender but not blistering. First-degree burns usually are not serious and under most circumstances, can be treated with self-care.

**Second-degree burn.** Your burn may be painful and swollen, with blisters and a weepy, watery surface. See your doctor. Self-care can help your burn feel better.

**Third-degree burn.** Your burn is severe, deep and possibly exposes underlying flesh. Your skin may be charred or whitened. If your nerves have been burned, you may feel pain around the edges of the burn, but not right on it. Self-care is not appropriate. Seek emergency help for all third-degree burns.

*Children and older adults are at higher risk for complications from burns and should seek immediate medical help.*



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## For first-degree burns:

- Wash with cool running water for at least two to three minutes or apply cool compresses as needed for comfort.
- Apply a topical antibiotic ointment and cover with a clean gauze or cloth bandage.
- Don't use local anesthetic sprays or creams. They can delay healing.

## For second-degree burns:

- Place small burns under cold running water for at least 10 to 15 minutes. Wash gently with soap and rinse.
- Apply antibiotic ointment and lightly cover with a bandage.
- Don't break any blisters.
- If your burn covers a large area, or is on your face, feet, genitals or hands, seek medical attention.

## For all burns:

- Try an over-the-counter pain reliever such as aspirin or acetaminophen, or an anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen or naproxen sodium, to help relieve pain and reduce inflammation. Don't give aspirin to anyone younger than age 19. It's linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare but sometimes fatal condition.
- While your burn is healing, keep dressings clean. Watch for any sign of infection, including increasing pain, redness or swelling.
- Remove rings, watches and jewelry to avoid problems if the area swells
- Make sure your tetanus status is up to date. If your last shot was more than five years ago or you're unsure of your status, you may need a tetanus shot.

## Preventing burns:

- Don't smoke. If you do, don't smoke in bed. Take care to prevent fires in your home. Install smoke alarms.
- Be very careful when ironing, cooking with hot oil or hot water, or using a curling iron.
- Follow proper safety procedures when using chemicals.
- Avoid prolonged exposure to the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Wear sunglasses, protective clothing and sunscreen with at least SPF 15.

## Don't Get Burned! How to Protect Your Body From Sun Damage

**Sunburn doesn't just cause pain and redness. It can also cause long-term effects. Learn the risks and find out how to protect yourself.**



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Between the beach, the pool, and the weekend cookouts, you may be having too much fun to worry about sunburn - until that telltale stinging and redness set in. Sunburn isn't just painful - it's also bad for your health.

## The dangers of sunburn

The sun's rays contain two types of ultraviolet light. Ultraviolet A (UVA) causes tanning, aging skin, and wrinkles. Ultraviolet B (UVB) causes sunburn. Both can cause skin cancer. You can burn on sunny days, cloudy days, and cold days. The white sand on the beach and the white snow of winter both reflect the sun's rays. You can burn whether you're skiing on water or snow.

Signs of sunburn are redness and pain. You may also have swelling and blistering. A bad sunburn can lead to heatstroke and dehydration.

## Long-term effects

Every time you tan or burn, DNA damage builds up in the deeper levels of your skin. Having 5 or more burns over a lifetime doubles your chances of getting skin cancer.

Other side effects of tanning and burning include premature wrinkles and age (pigment) spots. Over time, the sun can age your skin, making it tough and leathery.

Remember that your eyes can be affected, too. Too much sun can burn your corneas and lead to various eye diseases, including cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. These can cause vision loss.

## The truth about sunscreen

Wearing sunscreen doesn't always keep you from burning. No sunscreen can completely protect you from UV rays.

A sunscreen labeled "waterproof" or "water resistant" will not protect you all day. When you swim or sweat, reapply your sunscreen.

## The UV index

Your local news may broadcast daily UV index reports. The higher the index, the less time it will take to burn. Here is your risk for overexposure to the damaging UV rays. The number indicates the daily UV index, followed by the degree of risk. The higher the index on a given day, the greater the need to protect yourself.

- 0-2: low
- 3-5: moderate
- 6-8: high
- 8-10: very high
- 11+: extreme

## Preventing sunburn

Follow these prevention tips:

- **Use only water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen.** It should protect against both UVA and UVB rays and have an SPF of at least 15. Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.





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- **Wear protective clothing** when possible. Always include a hat and sunglasses.
- **Limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.** This is when UV rays are strongest. If your shadow is shorter than you are, get out of the sun.
- **Keep children in the shade and in protective clothing.** Follow the same sunscreen rules for them that you would for yourself. Don't use sunscreen on children younger than 6 months old. They should be kept out of the sun. If a child under age 1 gets sunburn, call your pediatrician right away. Also seek emergency care if a child of any age has a sunburn with fever, blistering, severe pain, or lethargy.
- **Be aware that water, snow, and sand all reflect UV rays** and increase your chances for sunburn.

## Treatment

Cool wet compresses, soothing lotions, and cool baths may help relieve minor sunburn pain. Drink plenty of fluids. For serious burns, call your doctor right away. Medication may prevent infection and help with the swelling and pain.

## Safety Rules for the Beach and Pool

**Some rules are not made to be broken, especially when they can prevent tragedy. Make sure your family knows the rules for the pool or beach before anyone sets foot in the water.**

Whether you choose the ocean, a lake or the local pool, you'll probably need to take a dip this summer to get relief from the heat. No matter how inviting the waters, though, tragedy can happen. Now is a good time to review the rules.

From toddlers who wander into family pools to swimmers caught up in the ocean's currents, neglecting to take the proper precautions can lead to deadly results.

### Drowning

Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death, averaging approximately 8,000 deaths per year in the U.S. Forty percent of these deaths occur in children younger than 5 years of age, with the majority being age 2. Half of all drownings occur between May and June, then in August.

Backyard pools are especially hazardous to young children. Above-ground pools are less dangerous because the height of the pool itself is a barrier, as well as the fence at the top of the steps that comes with many of these pools.

Children who can't swim should wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved Type I personal flotation device (PFD) when playing in or near water. When the child has more control in the water, he or she can move into a type II PFD.

"Water wings" or "floaties" are *not* a replacement for a PFD and will not keep a child who falls into the water afloat. Don't let the idea of floaties give you or your child a false sense of security. A Coast Guard-approved PFD is the *only* safe option for a child



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who can't swim.

## Rules for home pools:

- Learn to swim.
- Teach children to swim at the earliest age possible.
- Never leave a young child unattended near the pool. Don't take your eyes off the child, *not even for a few seconds*.
- When near the pool, have children who can't swim wear Coast Guard-approved PFDs.
- Don't allow running near the pool.
- Don't allow anyone to swim alone.
- Keep a phone by the pool for emergencies.
- Know how to do CPR.
- Install a fence around your pool at least four-feet high (local laws and ordinances may vary) with a self-closing and self-locking gate, with latches out of reach of a child.
- Keep lifesaving equipment near the pool.
- Don't allow inflatable toys or floats to replace parental supervision. Such devices often fail.
- Don't drink alcohol while swimming or supervising children.

## Rules for lakes, rivers and the ocean:

- Swim within visibility of a lifeguard.
- Supervise children *at all times*.
- Have children who can't swim wear Coast Guard-approved PFDs.
- Don't allow anyone to swim alone.
- Never dive without knowing the depth of the water and never dive into shallow water.
- Don't swim so far that you don't have the energy to swim back to shore.
- Don't drink alcohol while swimming or supervising children.
- Don't swim against the ocean's current. If caught in a current, swim across - not against - it. You will gradually swim out of it.

## Safety devices

Finally, if you have your own backyard pool, invest in a safety device to protect young children. Safety devices include poolside alarms and alarms for doors, gates and children's wrists.

No device, though, can substitute for parental supervision. The best way to protect your children is to always know where they are and to never assume that someone else is watching them.

By Diane Griffith, Staff Writer, myOptumHealth



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## Protect Your Pets From Fireworks

### Loud noises, bright objects traumatize animals, so take safety measures

Safe family fun on the Fourth of July means remembering the safety of pets, too, especially when it comes to noisy fireworks displays.

"Owners need to use common sense when letting their pet join in the festivities," Lorraine Corriveau, wellness veterinarian at Purdue University's School of Veterinary Medicine, said in a prepared statement.

"Some dogs love to chase those spinning and swirling objects on the ground. Others are traumatized by loud noises. Owners can help with tricks that can be as simple as putting cotton in their pet's ears to muffle the sound," Corriveau said.

#### Other steps pet owners can take over the holiday include:

- Don't leave pets alone outdoors, even if tethered or in a fenced yard.
- Remove sharp objects from enclosures.
- Turn on the radio or TV for distraction.
- Don't take pets to fireworks shows.
- Don't leave pets unattended in cars.
- If pets must be outside, keep them on a leash or in carriers.
- Protect pets from children who are using fireworks.
- Use sedation on horses and some dogs if necessary; your veterinarian can advise you about giving a pet a mild sedative or tranquilizer to calm fears of an extremely stressed animal.
- Pick up leftover sparklers and other sharp objects after the festivities.

## Emergency First Aid

It's smart to know how to deal with emergencies before they happen. Then, when you're faced with one, you'll know what to do. These first-aid measures can save lives. Once you've learned what they can do, prepare yourself for emergencies by getting the right training.

***If you are in an emergency situation, call 911 or your local emergency system for help immediately. If you don't have training, an operator can help walk you through the steps you need to take.***

### CPR

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is done when a person's breathing or heartbeat stops. If someone is unconscious with no



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signs of breathing or circulation, CPR should be used. Time is very important. If blood flow stops, permanent brain damage or death can occur within minutes.

CPR combines rescue breathing and chest compressions. Rescue breathing gives oxygen to the victim's lungs. Chest compressions help keep blood circulating. CPR is done until there is a regular heartbeat and breathing is restored. When CPR is started immediately, before emergency support arrives, it can triple the chance of survival.

## The Heimlich Maneuver

The Heimlich maneuver is used to help dislodge food or other objects causing a person to choke. Choking is fairly common. It's usually caused when food or an object gets stuck in the windpipe. It can lead to death. A person who is choking can't talk, cough or breathe. And, they may turn blue or dusky.

The Heimlich maneuver can be used safely on both adults and children over age one. But, it should only be used when you're sure a person is choking. You may be surprised to know that you also can do it to yourself.

## AEDs

Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are used to analyze and, when appropriate, restore a normal heart rhythm in sudden cardiac arrest victims. This usually happens when a heart attack causes the heart to develop ventricular fibrillation. This abnormal rhythm causes the heart to twitch ineffectively and become unable to pump blood. An AED uses an electric current to "reset" the heartbeat.

You can find AEDs in many public places. This computerized medical device can check a person's heart rhythm. And, it can tell you when a shock is needed. It uses voice prompts, lights and text messages to tell you what steps to take. AEDs are very accurate and easy to use. Within a few hours of training, anyone can learn to operate an AED safely.

## Save Lives by Getting Trained

Using these emergency techniques can save lives. But, they are best used by those who have been trained. CPR and Heimlich procedures vary slightly depending on the age, size or consciousness of the victim.

You can cause serious injury if you don't follow the steps correctly. Contact your local hospital or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) for information on training classes near you. And, once you've been trained, remember to stay updated.

## Keeping Teen Drivers Safe on the Road



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## Keeping Teen Drivers Safe on the Road

### Help your teenager stay safe on the road.

Ask any parent. One of the scariest things about raising a child may be letting him or her drive. With proms, graduations and beach trips, you may feel more nervous than ever about your child's safety on the road - and with good reason.

According to the National Safety Council (NSC), teen driving may be the greatest risk someone will ever face. The chance of a car crash is at a lifetime high in the first two years of driving.

Why is this? Teen drivers do not have experience. They don't notice and respond to possible driving problems. They don't control the car well, especially at high speeds. Teens also tend to take chances. They tend to give in to peer pressure. They may overestimate their abilities. They may have mood swings. They are easily distracted. All these factors can increase their risk of accidents.

There is good news, though. Based on the principles of Graduated Driver Licensing, adopted by most states, the NSC has put together some guidelines. Their *Family Guide to Teen Driver Safety* may help reduce driving risks for teenagers.

The NCS says the best way to improve driving safety is to work together. They suggest writing a Parent/Teen Agreement. It should set clear expectations for everyone. You and your teen should list:

- Privileges, such as getting the family car for a Friday night football game or a Saturday trip to the mall
- Restrictions, such as obeying a curfew, or driving with only one passenger
- What things a teen must do to show parents he or she is ready for more driving independence

Key messages you may want to include are to:

- Know and follow your state's requirements for teen driving.
- Select a safe vehicle, based on factors like size and safety features (visit [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org) for tips).
- Note that the two conditions that make driving more dangerous for teenagers are:
  - Driving with passengers
  - Driving at night
- Engage in safe behaviors, such as:
  - Wearing a seatbelt
  - Not drinking and driving
  - Not talking or texting on a cell phone while driving
  - Not eating or drinking while driving
  - Not speeding
  - Not driving when tired or while taking medication
- Get a lot of driving practice before getting a license



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You *can* make an impact on your teen's driving safety. Sit down with your teenager and write up a contract you all can live with - especially behind the wheel.

*By Laurie Sammeth, Contributing Writer, myOptumHealth*

## How Safe Is Your Playground?

### Learn important safety tips for playgrounds to help prevent playground injuries.

We tend to think of playgrounds as the perfect opportunity for our children to have fun while developing physical and social skills. But, we don't think about them being dangerous. Yet, just how safe is your backyard or neighborhood playground?

Each year about 200,000 children get emergency treatment for playground injuries. Here are some tips on making sure your children's playground continues to be a fun place.

**Supervise your children.** Accidents tend to happen when adults are not there to watch over children. Regardless of age, all children require some form of adult supervision. Preschool-aged children need close watching, older children less so. Adults need to be on the lookout for potential hazards, bullying or other problem behaviors and be available in case of injury.

**Consider whether playground equipment suits your child's age.** Playground equipment is designed for specific age groups because children develop more advanced skills as they age. Do not allow younger children to try equipment that has not been designed for them. Likewise, do not allow older children to play hazardously on equipment that has not been designed for an older pack.

**Inspect the playground area.** Before allowing your children to use playground equipment, closely look over the area. Is all equipment properly anchored into the ground? Do you see any exposed sharp edges or corners? Are nuts and bolts covered and are all S-hooks closed? Are climbing ropes anchored at both ends? Is there anything on the ground, such as broken glass, rocks, or tree roots that could injure a child?

**Make sure there is a soft material under the play equipment.** Most playground injuries result from a fall onto the playground surface. These injuries, including head trauma and broken bones, can be quite serious and even deadly. Hard surfaces like asphalt and concrete are dangerous. Likewise, grass and turf are poor shock absorbers and also unsafe. Some examples of recommended surfaces include: wood chips, double-shredded bark mulch, fine sand, shredded tires, engineered wood fibers and fine gravel. Usually a depth of between 6 and 12 inches of surfacing material is recommended.



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**Remove drawstrings from hoods, necks and children's outerwear.** Never allow children to wear anything around their neck, including purses, necklaces or clothing while on the playground. These items can easily get caught on equipment and hardware, resulting in choking and injury. .

**Review playground rules with your children before they begin to play.**

- Instruct children never to jump off a moving swing.
- Tell children not to walk in front or behind a swing that is in motion.
- Require that children go up and down the slide appropriately, and not climb up and over the sides.
- Reinforce the importance of taking turns.
- Encourage children to seek out an adult when problems arise.

