

Monthly Health Challenge™



# Drive Safely

**CHALLENGE**  
Practice safe driving habits.

And every 10 seconds, someone is injured in a car accident and taken to a hospital. Yet, most car accidents – like the pile-up in Tennessee or even a simple fender-bender – are preventable. Follow these tips to drive safely this month.



## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Drive Safely."
2. To complete this Challenge, practice safe driving habits on at least 22 days this month. (Wearing your seatbelt doesn't count; it's required by law in most places. Ex: Avoid using your cell phone or eating while driving.)

Tennessee resident James Terry pulled back the cover on his bright red Corvette and smiled. It was a perfect day for driving his dream car that he usually kept in the garage. He slid behind the wheel of the Corvette to make a trip to Nashville. It was a clear December morning, and dozens of other drivers were on the same highway.

But before long, road and weather conditions changed. Terry was going too fast when he drove into a thick patch of fog and onto a thin layer of ice. He collided with another car that was obscured by the fog. He wasn't the only driver who was going too fast or who was distracted by something else. He waited helplessly while another car crashed into his. And before the morning commute was over, 176 cars were piled up on the highway, 18 people were injured, and one driver was dead. Fortunately, Terry wasn't hurt in the pile-up.

More than five million car accidents occur each year in the United States. Every 12 minutes, someone dies in a car crash.

## Avoid Distractions

One out of every five car accidents is caused by some kind of distraction. A distraction is anything that makes you take your eyes off the road, your mind off the road, or your hands off the wheel. Examples include eating, using a cell phone or electronic device, personal grooming, talking or arguing with a passenger, being angry at other drivers, or changing the radio station. These things may not seem like a big deal. But distractions can turn an ordinary car ride into a serious problem in seconds. Make the effort to avoid distractions while driving.

### Hands Off Your Cell Phone

A cell phone can be a fast and convenient way to check your calendar, text a friend, make a phone call, or get directions. But it simply should never be used while driving. About 25 percent of car accidents are caused by drivers using cell phones to text or talk. It's such a prolific problem that most states now have laws restricting cell phone use while driving.

In a recent study, researchers found that drivers who use cell phones spend at least five seconds at a time looking away from the road. At highway speeds, that's enough time to travel the length of a football field. Researchers also found that using a cell phone to talk or text can delay a driver's reaction time as much as driving drunk. If you're guilty of using your cell phone while driving, resist the urge. Pull over to respond to a call or text. Use the hands-free feature, and keep it short. Turn off your phone. Or hand it to a passenger in the car to reply.

### Take the Safe Driving Quiz

Find out if your driving habits will help you drive safely and avoid an accident or injury.

**Y N**

- I sometimes eat, or use my cell phone while driving .
- I sometimes put my seatbelt on after driving a short distance.
- I sometimes drive over the speed limit.
- I sometimes get angry at other drivers.
- I sometimes drive even though I'm sleepy.

If you answered **yes** to any of the questions, you could benefit from learning more about safe driving practices. Wearing your seatbelt, following all traffic laws, and making smart choices when you drive will help you avoid an accident and serious injury.

## Watch Your Speed

About 30 percent of all fatal car accidents are caused by speeding. And it's one reason Terry's Corvette ended up in the junkyard. Speeding increases the risk for a serious accident. And that risk is even greater if you drive in poor weather conditions. Follow all posted speed limits.

## Don't Drink and Drive

About 900,000 people in the United States are arrested for drinking and driving each year. But an average drunk driver has been behind the wheel 80 times while drunk before ever being arrested. Alcohol and driving don't mix. In one minute, alcohol can reach your brain. And just a few drinks can slow your reaction time, coordination, memory, and judgment.

In the United States, nearly 12,000 people die every year in alcohol-related car accidents, and 345,000 people are injured. If you drink, use a designated driver, call a taxi, or ask someone for a ride. But never get behind the wheel. If you drink, allow two hours after every drink before driving.

## Wear Your Seatbelt

When you get in your car or truck, buckle up. Wearing a seatbelt reduces your risk for injuries by 50 percent if you are in a car accident. At a speed of just 30 miles per hour, an unrestrained passenger is thrown with a force 30 to 60 times their body weight. Make sure all passengers buckle up. And if you're driving with infants and small children, always have them ride in approved safety seats in the back. It only takes a few seconds to buckle up. But it could save your life.

## Be Prepared

Even if you are a safe driver, you may still encounter a problem while you're on the road. You could be in an accident caused by another driver. Or you might have a flat tire or mechanical problem. Here's how to be prepared:

- ✓ Learn how to change a flat tire before you get one.
- ✓ Carry jumper cables, a first aid kit, a flashlight, and a space blanket in your car.
- ✓ Use snow tires if appropriate for the weather conditions. Or carry tire chains, and learn how to install them.
- ✓ Carry a charged cell phone for emergencies.
- ✓ Know how to contact roadside assistance in case you need help. Save the number in your cell phone.

Create your own roadside emergency kit  
<http://tinyurl.com/7g4nrul>

## Top 10 Causes of Car Accidents

1. Using a cell phone
2. Adjusting vehicle controls
3. Eating in the car
4. Staring at some distraction
5. Drunk driving
6. Drug use
7. In-car distractions
8. Speeding and reckless driving
9. Bad weather
10. Poor road conditions

Source: American Automobile Association

## Safe Driving Checklist

Make a commitment to give your full attention to driving when you get in the car. Give yourself plenty of time to reach your destination. Heed weather condition warnings, and use common sense.



Here are some additional tips to help you drive safely:

- ✓ Make sure your vehicle is operating properly before you drive.
- ✓ Adjust climate controls and electronic devices before you begin your trip.
- ✓ Never drive in the rain with cruise control on. It can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- ✓ Don't follow too closely. Use a "three-second following distance" or about one car length for every 10 miles per hour.
- ✓ Watch for bicyclists, motorcyclists, and pedestrians. They are more difficult to see than cars.
- ✓ If you feel sleepy, pull over and rest.
- ✓ Relax. Being angry at another driver won't help you reach your destination.
- ✓ Don't smoke while you drive. Lighting up, putting out cigarettes, or dealing with falling ashes can be a deadly distraction.
- ✓ Avoid arguments and other distracting conversations while driving.
- ✓ Pull over in a safe place if your children need your attention.
- ✓ If you're late, don't speed. Apologize when you arrive. It's better than endangering lives.

Safe driving starts before you ever get behind the wheel. Decide now to practice safe driving habits to avoid a car accident, prevent injury, and be prepared for the unexpected.

### Sources:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.; U.S. Department of Transportation.; Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association.; National Safety Council.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



# Drive Safely

**CHALLENGE**  
Practice safe driving habits.

### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you practice safe driving habits (Wearing your seatbelt doesn't count; it's required by law in most places. Ex: Avoid using your cell phone or eating while driving.)
3. At the end of the month, total the number of days you practiced safe driving habits. To complete the Challenge, you must meet the goal on at least 22 days out of the month. Then keep up this practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: <input type="text"/>							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.	Weight & weekly summary
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I practiced safe driving habits

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



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