

Motor Vehicle Traffic Safety Fact Sheet Virginia 2009

Motor vehicle related injuries are the leading cause of injury death in Virginia and the United States.

Motor Vehicle Injuries in Virginia, 2009

- There were 763 motor vehicle traffic (MVT) deaths in 2009, accounting for one-third of all unintentional injury related deaths.
- There were a total of 4,566 MVT injury hospitalizations in 2009.
- The median charge per episode of care was \$29,927, and the average length of stay was 6 days.
- Over 264 million dollars were billed due to MVT hospitalizations.
- One-third of MVT-related hospitalizations involved a traumatic brain injury.

PREVENTION TIPS:

All Divers

- **Always wear your seat belt**--and wear it correctly. It should go over your shoulder and across your lap. All passengers should be properly secured while riding in a vehicle. An unbuckled passenger can become a projectile in a crash and can injure or kill other persons in the vehicle.
- **Don't Drive Distracted**- Avoid distractions while driving (i.e., texting, talking on a cell phone, eating, grooming, using maps). If necessary pull the vehicle over to a safe location to take care of any non-driving business.
- **Never drive when you are tired**- If you start to feel tired, stop your car somewhere safe. Take a break until you feel more alert.
- **Drive at the speed limit**- It is unsafe to drive too fast or too slow.
- **Have your car checked annually**- Always be sure to complete all required maintenance on your vehicle before driving.
- **Never drink and drive**- Any amount of alcohol can impair or alter your reaction time.

Teen Drivers

- **Graduated drivers licensing (GDL) programs**-- GDL programs apply restrictions to teen drivers as they gain valuable driving experience. To learn more about Virginia's GDL program visit www.dmv.virginia.gov.
- **Encourage teens to wear seatbelts during each trip**-- Nearly 12% of Virginia teens surveyed reported rarely or never wearing a seat belt when riding in a car.
- **Talk to teens about riding with someone who has been drinking**-- Nearly 25% of Virginia teens surveyed reported riding with a driver who had been drinking alcohol within the past 30 days.
- **Driver responsibility pact**- If you're a parent of a teen who is learning to drive, take an active role in the process. Sign an agreement with them to limit risky driving situations. Parents of teens under 18 years of age must certify that their child has had at least 45 hours of driving practice, 15 of which must have been completed after sunset. To help meet this requirement use the 45-hour parent/teen driving guide available at any Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

Older Adult Drivers

- **Talk with doctor or pharmacist frequently**-- Review medicines, both prescription and over-the-counter, to understand side effects and interactions that may affect driving and reaction time.
- **Have an annual physical and eye exam**-- The doctor can check reflex capabilities and evaluate one's fitness to drive. Wear glasses and corrective lenses as required.
- **Leave long following distances**-- Because response times may be longer, leaving a large following distance between cars to allow for adequate stopping time.
- **Find alternatives to driving**-- Identify potential alternatives to driving, such as riding with a friend or using public transit.

Injury and Violence Prevention Program
Virginia Department of Health
1-800-732-8333
www.vahealth.org/injury