Overconfident & Underprepared

REVIEWING DRIVING SAFETY

How many of us believe that we’re the best driver around? Everyone nodding or raising your hand? Even if we are the best driver on the road and we’ve been driving for years upon years, things can still happen. And in fact, sometimes it’s because we’ve been driving for years that things happen—we get lazy and forget some basic rules that are meant to keep us—and everyone else on the road—safe.

The top three things that cause deadly car accidents are drunk driving, speeding, and distracted driving. Distracted driving includes everything from texting, using your GPS, finding your favorite song, talking on the phone, even eating. 90% of accidents are attributed to driver error. Let’s remind ourselves what it takes to get from point A to point B without incident.

» Do not drive impaired. This can mean being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, including certain prescription drugs such as narcotics or sleep aids. This can also mean being sleep-deprived. Falling asleep at the wheel is just as dangerous as driving drunk. Being awake for 18-24 hours is the equivalent of driving with a blood alcohol level of 0.05-0.10. For reference, 0.08 is considered drunk.

» Do not drive distracted. Texting while driving is not okay. We all know this, but how many obey? You also shouldn’t rely on your phone for taking calls, GPS, or streaming music while driving. Get everything prepared and know where you’re going before you start driving.

» Buckle up! Everyone in the car should be restrained appropriately—seat belts or car seats.

» Drive the speed limit and obey all traffic signals. A yellow light means slow down and stop, it does not mean speed up and get through it before it turns red. And be aware of school zones where the speed limit is lowered during certain times of day.

» Always be predictable but never assume anyone else is driving that way. Use your turn signals, switch lanes slowly and with plenty of warning, yield to the right of way, etc. However, you should be prepared for the other drivers on the road to NOT do those things so you aren’t surprised by their actions.
» By law, when emergency vehicles are on the side of the road, you must switch lanes or slow down if there is only one lane. It is a courtesy to do this for ALL vehicles (and bikers and pedestrians), not just police officers and workers.

» Use those headlights, even during the day. Especially if it’s gloomy, rainy, or foggy.

» Don’t turn on your high beams/brights unless you’re the only car around. It is very difficult for others to see the road, whether you’re on the opposite side of the road coming toward them or you’re behind them.

» Adjust your driving for the weather conditions. Fog, rain, snow, ice—we should slow our speed and be on alert. Always be prepared in case of sliding or hydroplaning.

» Leave plenty of space between yourself and the car in front of you. The general rule is to maintain 3-4 seconds between you, assuming driving conditions are perfect. Increase the time according to weather or other factors, such as following a semi-truck.

» Keep your eyes moving! You should always be scanning the road for dangers, animals, yielding cars. Always check your mirrors and be aware of your surroundings.

» Never pass a stopped bus who has the stop sign pulled out. Wait behind them so all children can exit safely.

» If you hear a siren behind you, pull over and stop until the police officer, ambulance, or fire truck has passed.

» Always drive in the right lane unless passing. Aggressive drivers become more aggressive when slower drivers remain in the left lane. Protect yourself and move over!

As technology advances, life becomes more convenient. Unfortunately, convenience does not equal safety. Those fancy dashboards and cell phones are simply a temptation and a distraction. Leave them alone and focus on the task at hand—which should be getting you and your loved ones safely to your destination.

WHAT IF YOU GET IN AN ACCIDENT?

» Make sure everyone is okay—you yourself, your passengers, and other vehicles involved.

» Call 911 while you remain at the scene.

» If possible, wait in your car for the police to arrive, especially if you’re on a busy highway.

» Stay calm.

» Exchange contact and insurance info with the other driver.

» Contact your insurance company to report the accident.
Vaccines

DON’T LET THE FLU TAKE YOU DOWN

Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus, affecting the lungs, nose, and throat. This is also referred to as the flu and can sometimes be confused with the stomach flu, or gastroenteritis. They are entirely different (although neither one is fun)!

Symptoms of influenza can seem similar to the common cold but they come on more quickly and take you down much harder.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS INCLUDE:

» Fever or feeling feverish/chills
» Cough
» Sore throat
» Runny or stuffy nose
» Muscle or body aches
» Headache
» Fatigue
» Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea (especially in children)

There are actually four different types of influenza: A, B, C, and D. There are also many subtypes and strains, but we won’t concern ourselves with those details.

Influenza D primarily affects cattle and is not known to affect people at all.

Influenza C does affect people but is usually fairly mild and does not spread rapidly.

Influenza A and B are the ones that affect many people each winter.

WHAT IS AN EPIDEMIC?

An epidemic is when a disease affects more people than usual.

WHAT IS A PANDEMIC?

An influenza pandemic is when a new influenza strain spreads worldwide and most people do not have immunity.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT GETTING THE FLU?

The flu vaccine is our best defense against influenza. The vaccine is made each year to target the 3-4
influenza viruses we are most likely to encounter. It is 70-90% effective in preventing influenza and for those who still get the flu, the severity of symptoms will be lessened for those who received their vaccine. It not only protects us, but those around us who may be considered high-risk.

A common misconception is that you can get sick or get the flu after receiving the flu vaccine. There have been many studies done to research this and it is not true —there have been no changes regarding a high fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, etc.

What CAN occur after a flu vaccine: redness and tenderness where the shot was given (typically the upper arm) as well as headaches and a low-grade fever. These symptoms usually only last 1-2 days in those who experience them and are definitely better than getting the actual influenza virus.

WHEN IS FLU SEASON?

Every year the seasonal flu is different, but it typically begins around October and ends around May, peaking between December and February. It is recommended that you get the vaccine by the end of October each year but even if you haven’t gotten it, it’s not too late! You can still get it as late as the end of January. Everyone 6 months and older should be seeing their doctor about getting a vaccine.

HOW CAN WE FEEL BETTER IF WE GET THE FLU?

» Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids.

» Tylenol or ibuprofen can be used to help with body aches or fevers.

» Try a cool-mist humidifier if your nose or throat feel dry/sore.

» Salt water gargles, cough drops, or hard candy can help a sore throat.

» Be patient! Let the flu run its course and you should feel better in a few days. No extra medication, such as Tamiflu, is needed unless you are high-risk (immunosuppressed, diabetic, have a heart condition, etc.) or it is recommended by your doctor. Please see your doctor if you’re wondering if you or your child need medication

» Don’t forget that influenza is contagious, spread by coughing or sneezing. Always cough or sneeze into a tissue and throw it away, then wash your hands. Washing your hands is the key to keeping this virus to yourself. Once you feel better and are fever-free for at least 24 hours, you may head back to work.

WHERE CAN WE GET A FLU VACCINE?

Many of these places offer flu shots for free, making it easy and convenient. Depending on where you work, they may offer it there as well.

» Grocery Stores
» Pharmacies
» Urgent Care Centers
» Colleges

» Doctors’ offices
» County Health Department
Prevent the Spread of Infection
PRACTICE GOOD HAND HYGIENE

Washing your hands is the key to keeping yourself and your loved ones healthy and to stop the spread of germs. So what details do we need to know?

Follow these five simple steps to wash your hands well and prevent spreading infection:

1. **Wet** your hands with clean, running water and apply soap. Water can be warm or cold—studies don’t show a difference in germ removal—but cold is better for the environment and for your skin. To conserve water, turn it off once you wet your hands!

2. **Lather** your hands with the soap by rubbing your hands together. Rub and scrub the tops and bottoms of your hands, your wrists, in between your fingers, and underneath your fingernails.

3. **Scrub** your hands together for at least 20 seconds. Singing or humming the “Happy Birthday” song twice is a perfect timer!

4. **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water. Again, temperature is up to you!

5. **Dry** your hands well using a clean towel or letting them air dry. Germs are transferred more easily from wet hands.

Running water is important because standing water can be contaminated and can recontaminate your hands. It can be used if you have no other option.

Some people believe a paper towel should be used to shut off the faucet after hand washing, but there is not much data that supports this. It increases water and paper towel use, however, and is not necessary to worry about.

The lathering and scrubbing of the entire hand really helps lift dirt, grease, and microbes from the skin. Soap aids in lifting those germs, and people wash more effectively when they use it.

**WHY DO WE NEED TO WASH OUR HANDS?**

» Feces is a major source of spreading viruses, such as norovirus, E. coli, Salmonella, etc. When people do not wash their hands after using the restroom, this can be spread to objects or food very easily. These can also be
spread through animal feces by touching raw meat.

» Germs on unwashed hands can be spread through food and drinks as people are preparing it and then eating it.

» Germs can be spread to objects such as toys, tables, countertops, handrails, etc.

» People touch their eyes, mouth, and nose often and as they pick up germs and don’t wash their hands, they are transferring these germs through those mucous membranes.

WHEN SHOULD WE BE WASHING?
All the time! But, more specifically:

» After using the bathroom.

» After helping a child use the bathroom or after changing a diaper.

» After touching an animal or anything related to animals (feeding, waste, etc.)—this includes pets as well.

» After touching or handling garbage.

» After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.

» Before eating.

» Before AND after treating a cut or wound.

» Before AND after caring for a loved one who is sick. Especially if they are vomiting or have diarrhea.

» Before, during, AND after preparing food.

WHAT ABOUT HAND SANITIZER?

Hand sanitizer may be used if soap and water are not available, but there are a few key details to remember:

» Using soap and water is preferred if available.

» Hand sanitizer must be alcohol-based with at least 60% alcohol to be effective.

» It is not as effective if your hands are visibly soiled.

» Pesticides and heavy metals are likely not removed from hand sanitizers.

» Being alcohol-based means you can get alcohol poisoning! Specifically, our young children! So keep it out of reach, in a safe place.

» Rub the hand sanitizer in all over the tops and bottoms of your hands, including between the fingers. Just like you would with soap and water!

» And again, just like with soap and water, it is important for your hands to dry completely.

Don’t forget about children. They need to wash their hands as often (or more often) as adults. Teach them how to properly wash with soap and water, and how to use hand sanitizer as well. It’s also very important to teach them to cough and sneeze into a tissue or their sleeve, and then wash their hands immediately. Germs are so easily passed from children because they do not understand the precautions that are necessary.

ACCORDING TO THE CDC:

» It is estimated that washing your hands reduces deaths related to diarrhea by up to 50%.

» One million deaths could be prevented EACH YEAR if we all started washing our hands regularly.

» Hand washing reduces the risk of respiratory infections by 16%.

» In one study in schools totaling 6,000 students, the rate of absenteeism due to illness went down 19.8% after introducing alcohol-based hand sanitizer to the classroom.
The Common Cold
HOW TO DEAL WITH IT

The common cold affects children 5-10 times per year and adults 2-3 times. Seems like someone in the family is always recovering from something, doesn’t it? It is the main reason kids miss school and adults miss work. If you’re running a low-grade fever, which is expected with the cold, you do need to stay home until you’re fever-free for at least 24 hours without the help of medication.

Most people catch a cold in the winter or spring but you can get it anytime. The common cold usually resolves on its own in 7-10 days and, unfortunately, there’s nothing we can do to speed it along. Antibiotics aren’t prescribed for colds in America.

EXPECTED SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:
» Fever
» Sore throat
» Runny or stuffy nose
» Coughing
» Sneezing
» Fatigue
» Headaches
» Body aches

WHAT CAN WE DO TO FEEL BETTER?
» Tylenol or ibuprofen for discomfort or fever. (No ibuprofen for your little ones under 6 months old. No aspirin for anyone under 18 years old.)
» Cool-mist humidifier to moisten the air. This will help stuffy noses and sore throats.
» Drink extra fluids. Soups, popsicles, tea—anything that sounds good.
» Cough drops to help the cough.
» A spoonful of honey can also help with coughing and a sore throat. (No honey for babies under 1 year old.)
» The effectiveness of cough and cold medicine is not fully proven, even in adults, and not recommended at all for children. It’s always tempting to grab whatever promises to assist you in your illness, but try to be patient and just let it cycle out of your system on its own.
» Get extra rest. Your body heals while you sleep!
» Avoid smoke and other irritants.

Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.
» Use nasal drops or sprays to help with stuffy noses.

» Gargle with salt water to soothe a sore throat.

There are some popular alternative remedies for colds, but the research is mixed and they have not been proven to actually help. Some examples of these are Vitamin C, Zinc, and Echinacea. If you are healthy and not on prescription medication that contraindicate their usage, use as directed according to the label. (It should be noted that taking a zinc supplement may cause nausea, so be aware of that and discuss options with your doctor if needed.)

The most important thing we can do to prevent catching or spreading colds is to wash our hands! Colds spread like wildfire because the virus lives on everything we touch! So wash hands, keep hands away from face, cough/sneeze into a tissue or sleeve, and clean all surfaces/phones/toys frequently.

WHEN SHOULD WE BE CONCERNED AND GIVE OUR DOCTOR A CALL?

» Fever lasts longer than 3 days

» Sore throat is severe and you’re questioning strep throat

» Nasal discharge present >14 days or if you ever have severe sinus pain

» Coughing more than 3 weeks

» Wheezing or shortness of breath

» Moderate to severe muscle aches

» Symptoms seem to be worsening instead of improving

Usually the first few days are the most uncomfortable and then we slowly start to feel better and drain less. Hopefully you enjoy the ‘downtime’ while you have it and enjoy a movie or two! Soon - back to work!

PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS:

» Wash your hands with soap and water frequently

» Stay away from others when you are sick

» Stay away from others who are sick

» Keep your unwashed hands away from your face

» Move away from others if you need to cough or sneeze

» Disinfect surfaces and objects frequently

» Don’t share cups or utensils