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## Teens better texters when behind wheel

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### Don't text and drive

Texting while driving increases your odds of being in a crash by about 23 per cent.

It's no surprise he can kick his parents to the curb on anything resembling a computer, but a recent study from the U.S. says he might even manage it while driving — at least better than we can.

To be clear: texting while driving is illegal because it is a death wish, not only for the offender, but innocent others on the road.

According to the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA), distracted driving — with cellphones being the most common culprit — factors into four million motor vehicle crashes in North America a year.

In particular, texting while driving increases your odds of being in a crash by about 23 per cent, and it seems the Canadian public is well aware of the dangers. A recent CAA poll found the vast majority of us (90 per cent) agree texting while driving is unacceptable. In fact, respondents rated texting and answering emails at the top of their list of road safety concerns, followed by drinking and driving.

A fascinating study from Wayne State University (Detroit) confirms this, but also found the older you get, the more

Posted: Wednesday, February 18, 2015 3:00 am

By **Shannon Linden** | 0 comments

Do you know the leading cause of death of British Columbia's teens?

Car crashes are responsible for killing 16-20 years old, more than any illness or accident, with more than 70 per cent of those fatalities being young men.

Sobering statistics, to be sure, but a recent study suggests there's one thing youngsters are better at behind the wheel: texting.

All you have to do is put your reading glasses on and stand behind an adroit teen on his telephone to be reminded his dexterity is the stuff of your dreams.

Not only do his fingers fly at surprising speed, my son doesn't even look at the keypad. In fact, he can carry-on a full conversation with me while doing the same with someone else on his phone.

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dangerous it is to text and drive.

A story by Max Ufberg, in Pacific Standard, outlined findings from the study, conducted by associate professors of pharmaceutical studies and occupational therapy. Researchers divided participants into age groups, ranging from 18-24, 25-34, 35-44 and 45-59, asking them to text while attempting to drive in a specialized simulator.

Half of all the subjects veered into other lanes, but absolutely everyone in the oldest group did so. In fact, performance got progressively more dismal with age, while less than 25 per cent of the youngest group crossed lanes.

The study proved a point many teens probably pronounce: they're better texters than their parents, putting to rest the notion that more experienced drivers manage all distractions better than less-experienced ones.

The take-home point, however, is not that young drivers can go ahead and text. It's this: parents cannot continue to excuse their own driving-and-texting habits by claiming they can handle distraction better than their kids.

Happily, the majority of participants — regardless of age — admitted texting and driving was far more dangerous than they realized.

I would like to add something to the discussion: texting and running is also a bad idea.

It was a lovely morning, perfect for a little jog around the mountain. With my husband behind and our dog darting out front, I smiled, breathing in the fresh air and soaking up slivers of sunshine, marvelling at the barren earth, free of its winter coat — and laden with freshly exposed, gnarly tree roots.

I was watching my feet, conscious of the hazards of the twisty trail, when my phone vibrated in my pocket and chimed with an incoming message.

It was our daughter — very important, of course — and for reasons unknown to me, given my track record of sprained ankles, I determined I could reply and run at the same time.

I took my eyes off the path, tried to type, and went straight — well, actually, kind of crooked — down. As my toe clipped a stone (where did that come from?) sending me sailing, I somehow managed to hold onto my phone, but not my dignity.

"What happened?" My husband, bewildered, looked down at me, sprawled on the path before him.

You know when one minute you are carelessly texting and the next you are kissing dirt?

No? You're probably smarter than me — or about 18 years old.

**Shannon Linden writes a blog, magazine articles, and grocery lists. Her health and humor column runs Wednesdays in the Kelowna Daily Courier. Talk to her at [lindenshannon@mac.com](mailto:lindenshannon@mac.com).**

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