

5 Tips for Improving Health, Wellness & Safety

Tip #1: Prevent distracted driving

Using your phone while driving is a dangerous distraction. 5,000 deaths per year are attributed to distracted driving. Texting takes the driver's eyes off the road for an average of about 5 seconds; that's like driving the entire distance of a football field blindfolded. As of 10/1/2014, it is illegal in Vermont to use a handheld cellphone while driving. If you need to text or talk while in your car, do yourself and everyone else on the road a favor and pull over!

Tip #2: Always wear a helmet

Wearing a helmet while participating in certain sports and activities can prevent significant brain injury and permanent neurologic damage. Vermont boasts great skiing, snowboarding, skating, and biking. Cuts, bruises, and even broken bones will heal, but damage to your brain can be permanent. Even a low-speed fall can result in serious head injury. Wearing a helmet reduces the risk of serious head and brain injury by 85%. Children 5 to 14 years of age have the highest injury rate of all bicycle riders, and bike accidents are a leading cause of death for children. Protect your head!

Tip #3: Always wear a seat belt

Seat belt use is the most effective way to save lives and reduce injuries in crashes. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among those age 5–34 in the United States. Millions of adult drivers and passengers were treated in emergency departments last year as the result of being injured in motor vehicle crashes. Use a seat belt on every trip, no matter how short and make sure children are properly buckled up in an appropriate seat belt, booster seat, or car seat. Have all children 12 and under sit in the back seat and never seat a child in front of an air bag. Place children in the middle of the back seat when possible because it is the safest spot in the vehicle. Buckle up!

Tip #4: Quit tobacco/e-cigarettes

Are you ready to stop smoking or chewing tobacco? Use the 4 D's to help you handle cravings while you're trying to quit: delay, drink water, deep breathing, do something else! Quit coaching can double or even triple your chance of successfully quitting, so take advantage of the free help that's out there. Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) or visit 802Quits.org to find a Vermont Quit Partner offering classes in your area.

Tip #5: Get a flu shot

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different and even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. The "seasonal flu season" is from October to May. During this time, flu viruses are circulating in the population. An annual seasonal flu vaccine (either the flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine) is the best way to reduce the chances that you will get the flu. Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination which protect against infection.