

# Taking Charge of Your Health

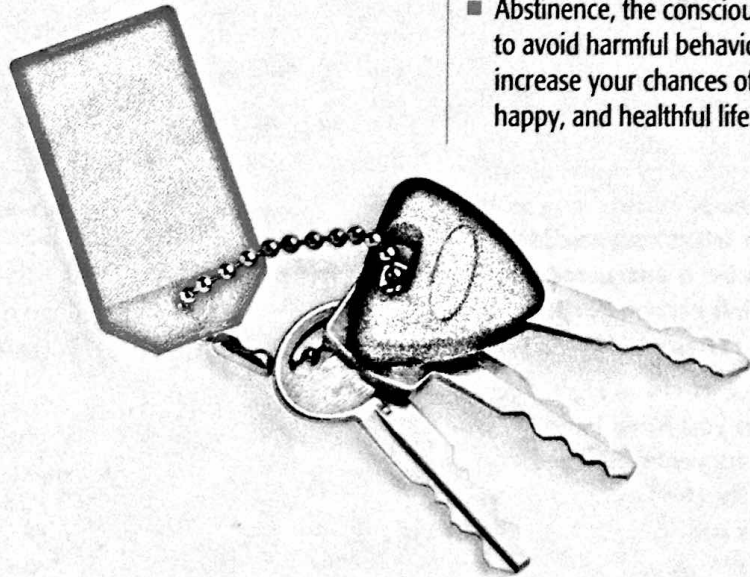
You may be responsible for decisions such as buying your own clothes and for managing your schedule. As you move toward adulthood, you become increasingly responsible for more decisions regarding your health. This lesson will help you learn how to make choices to help you live a long and healthy life.

## HEALTH TERMS

**risk factors**  
**values**  
**abstinence**

## HEALTH CONCEPTS

- Accepting responsibility for your own health and for the health of others is a positive step toward wellness.
- Risk factors can be offset by behaviors, including making choices and practicing habits that promote good health.
- Abstinence, the conscious decision to avoid harmful behaviors, can increase your chances of a long, happy, and healthful life.



## Taking Responsibility for Your Health

Does the prospect of taking on adult responsibilities excite you? Maybe it frightens you a little. Perhaps you are wondering how you get from the teenager you are now to the fully responsible adult you are rapidly becoming.

A first step toward bridging that gap, at least where your health is concerned, is to increase your awareness of risk factors in your life. **Risk factors** are *actions or behaviors that represent a potential health threat*. A second step is to examine your current behaviors and values and to make any necessary changes.

### Risk Factors and Teens

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta annually conducts nationwide surveys of America's youth. In the



▲ **With what responsibilities have you been entrusted so far? Which responsibilities do you look forward to?**

**ACTIVITY** List three rights or privileges you have been given in previous years. Next to each, write the responsibility that goes along with that right or privilege.

most recent survey, questionnaires on personal risk factors were gathered from over 16,000 students and young adults from 151 schools across the nation. The six categories of personal health risk factors covered in the survey are listed below.

- behaviors that contribute to unintentional and intentional injuries
- tobacco use
- alcohol and other drug use
- sexual behaviors
- unhealthy eating behaviors
- physical inactivity

Throughout this program you will learn how teens, like yourself, responded to questions addressing these risk factors. You will also learn about what you can do to reduce or eliminate the risk factors in your life.

### **Examining Your Habits and Other Behaviors**

One finding of the CDC survey is that 36 percent of the teens interviewed smoked cigarettes. Another 15 percent admitted to been in a physical fight during the previous year. While these numbers may sound alarming at first, they also mean that 64 and 85 percent of the teens surveyed, respectively, *did not* engage in these high-risk behaviors.

Where do you fit in? Are you doing everything you can in the

interests of your own health and well-being? At the beginning of each chapter in this program, you will find a Health Barometer Self-Inventory like the one on page 3. Through these inventories, you will be able to gauge your behaviors. You will also learn what areas you need to improve.

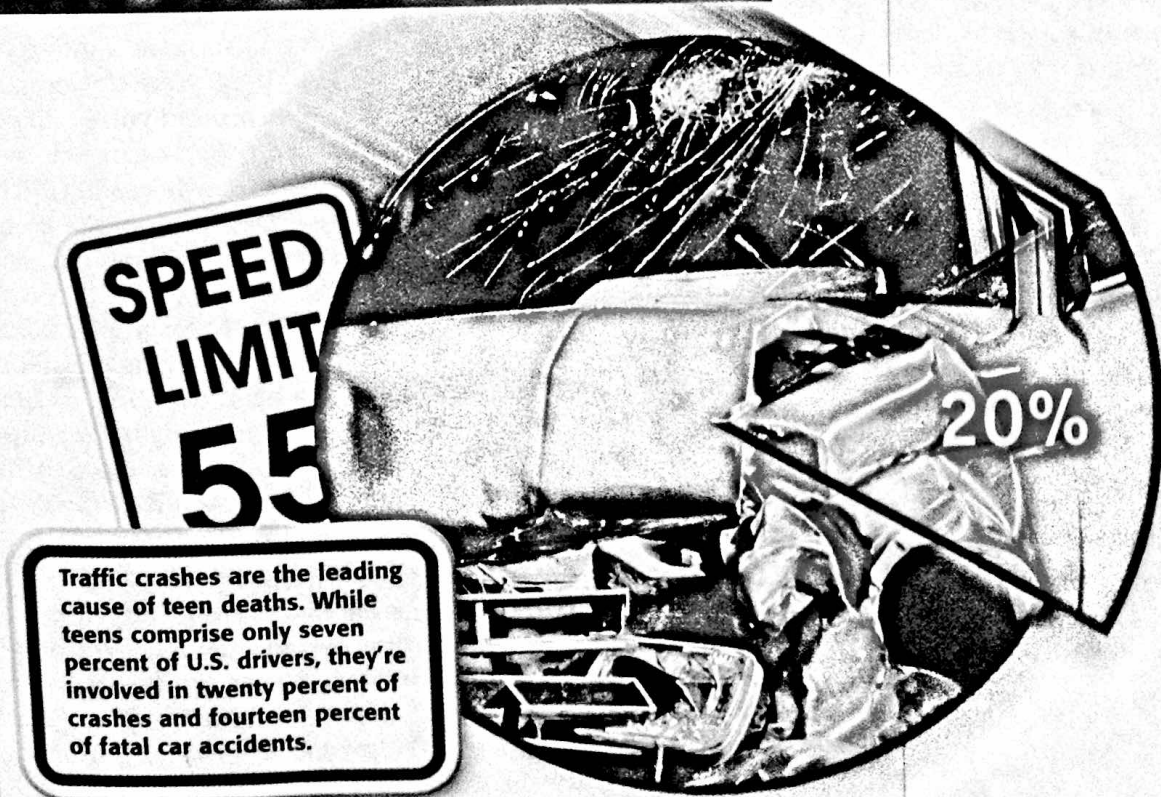
## Cumulative Risks

Cumulative risks are risks that increase gradually and may add up to a total that is greater than expected. Smoking one cigarette is not likely to result in death. Neither is getting one sunburn. If these habits are repeated over time, however, the negative effects *accumulate*, leading to serious health consequences.

Cumulative risks may also be combinations of risk factors whose impact is more serious than that of any component risk alone. Driving over the posted speed limit is a risk factor that can have deadly results. Another is not wearing seat belts when you drive or ride in a car. When these two behaviors occur at the same time, the potential for harm to yourself and to others is greatly magnified.

Cumulative risks can and *do* occur in all areas of health and safety. In this program, you will learn strategies for minimizing risks of all sizes.

## TEENS AND CAR ACCIDENTS



**HEALTH**  
*Online*



Visit [health.glencoe.com](http://health.glencoe.com) and discover six types of risk behaviors. Learn steps to help you adopt healthy habits. Complete the online questionnaire to find out how you could improve your health behavior.

▼ **There are many precautions you can take each day to prevent injuries and reduce the chances of getting hurt.**

**ACTIVITY** Identify cumulative risks that can be associated with driving a car. What other cumulative risks can affect your health?

## Taking Responsibility for the Health of Others

Have you ever skipped a stone across the calm surface of a lake or pond and noticed how it creates ripples? In a way, the “ripple effect” you noticed is a metaphor for your actions and behaviors. How you act and behave affects not only yourself, but others around you. A reckless driver risks his or her own life as well as the lives of others.

Taking responsibility for your health includes showing concern for the health of others. Be aware that this responsibility does not end with the people in your immediate environment. It extends, rather, to the community at large. As you learned in Lesson 1, one of the measures of a health-literate person is responsible citizenship. As you grow older and more mature, you will be expected to behave as a responsible and productive citizen.

This includes having a concern for the welfare of the community and a respect for public property and for the property of others. Remember, your environment is a health influence you can help to control. Your health is dependent on your environment’s health. So is the health of those around you.



▲ **Values help shape your behavior.**

**ACTIVITY** *What values might prompt the teen in this photo to donate his time to clean up his environment?*

decreases and the chances for growing up as a healthy, caring, and responsible adult increase. Some of these factors, including having support and encouragement from the people in your life, are part of your social environment and were addressed in Lesson 2. Other protective factors include positive role models and values.

- **Positive Role Models.** Role models are peers, or others that a young person looks up to. Positive role models inspire you to work harder, to look toward the future, and to choose healthful behaviors. By *being* a positive role model, you can inspire others around you.
- **Positive Values.** Your values are *beliefs and standards of conduct that you find important*. Values include character traits such as honesty, integrity, courage, loyalty, and hard work. The earliest

source of values for most people is the family. Your values also reflect to some extent those of society, which is governed by a code of what is right and wrong.

How do your values impact your health and the decisions you make? A person who values perseverance, or “stick-to-it-iveness,” is more likely to maintain a newly begun exercise program. A person with the courage of his or her own convictions will less likely give in to pressure from peers to participate in high-risk behavior. Instead, he or she will choose abstinence. **Abstinence** is *voluntarily choosing not to do something*.

## Abstinence and Your Health

**R**esponsible teens, who value their health, abstain from sexual activity before marriage and from other high-risk behaviors, such as using tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. As you will learn through this program, abstinence from high risk behaviors is one of the most important health behaviors you can make as a teen.

Although you may not relate your present actions to how they will affect you in the future, it is important to remember that the behaviors you practice now are setting the stage for the health of the adult you will become.



## Acting on Your Values

You may find that it's not always easy to act on your values—to do the right thing. You might try these approaches:

- Imagine yourself in a situation where your values are challenged and consider your options.
- Practice what you will do or say when faced with a difficult situation.
- Make a list or write a skit to show how you would stand up for what you believe is important.

### LESSON

### 3

## Review

### Reviewing Facts and Vocabulary

1. Explain how protective factors can offset risks.
2. Explain the differences and similarities between attitudes and values with respect to their role in health.

### Thinking Critically

3. **Analyzing.** Why might a teen who is informed about health not practice good health habits? Would the teen be considered health literate?
4. **Comparing and Contrasting.** Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In one column list all the responsibilities you have gained in the past year. In the other column identify the responsibilities that are directly related to your health.

### Applying Health Skills

5. **In Your School.** Visit a branch of the public library that maintains back files of newspapers on film. Alternatively, if the classroom computer is hooked by modem to an on-line service that maintains an electronic version of one or more daily newspapers, log on and use the Search command to locate articles having to do with health. Select and read several articles. Conclude by writing a report on the health knowledge you have gained through your research.