Fall is back-to-school time, and for many teens it is back to sports as well. For these athletes, losing is a worst-case scenario, but for parents and coaches, injury tops the list.

The leading cause of death from sports-related injuries is traumatic brain injury (TBI), which occurs when a bump or blow to the head or body disrupts brain function. With recent media attention on the long-term, and sometimes deadly, consequences of sports-related head injuries, parents and coaches are taking more steps to protect athletes.

Concussions are by far the most common form of TBI. Multiple concussions have been linked to severe cognitive decline in professional athletes. A report in the journal *Brain* showed that participants with one or two past concussions exhibited impairment in some skills similar to those with early dementia.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Heads Up program recommends coaches have a concussion action plan, know the symptoms, know how to respond, and educate players and parents about the severity of concussions. A basic action plan outlines when to remove an athlete from play, ensures they receive medical attention, provides parents with educational materials, and keeps the athlete out of play until a medical professional consents.

### Concussion signs observed by coaches
- Dazed, stunned
- Forgets instruction
- Unsure of game, score, opponent
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can’t recall events prior to or after hit or fall

*Source: CDC*

### BIRTH DEFECTS and antidepressants

Antidepressants were once considered to be a safe option for pregnant women suffering from depression, but recent studies and lawsuits suggest otherwise.

A wide range of birth defects are now being associated with using antidepressant medication during pregnancy. Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) drugs—for instance, Paxil, Zoloft, Prozac, Celexa, Lexapro—and Effexor, a serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor, have been associated with structural birth defects such as intestinal and abdominal organs outside the body, spina bifida, club foot, and craniosynostosis (abnormally shaped skull).

Congenital heart and lung problems are linked to SSRI use in pregnancy, including primary pulmonary hypertension, persistent pulmonary hypertension, hypoplastic left heart syndrome, transposition of the great arteries, heart murmur, and vertical and atrial septal defects. Infants of women who took Wellbutrin during early pregnancy had double the risk of left outflow heart defect.
Renting a vehicle for vacation, a business trip, or even renting a sports or luxury car for a special date night or reunion is usually a pleasant experience. People rely on companies to make sure fleets are safe. For example, if a vehicle is recalled for safety reasons, renters have a reasonable expectation that it won’t be rented until it is repaired.

But that’s not always the case. Unfortunately, when a rental company rents vehicles with known safety issues, the consequences can be deadly. Sadly, sisters Jacqueline and Raechel Houck, of California, were killed when their rental car caught fire, and they lost control of the vehicle. The PT Cruiser they had rented had been recalled for defective power steering hoses that posed a fire risk, but had not yet been fixed.

The family won a multimillion-dollar jury verdict against Enterprise. The parents of the victims have teamed up with the Center for Automotive Safety and Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety to help bring the issue into the public spotlight. They have also petitioned the Federal Trade Commission to prevent the rental of recalled vehicles that have not been fixed.

Rental recall and repair report

A 2011 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration study reported on the time between recall and repair at three nationally recognized rental vehicle businesses.

Enterprise repaired only 65 percent of recalled vehicles within 90 days.

Avis/Budget repaired only 53 percent of recalled vehicles within 90 days.

Hertz repaired only 34 percent of recalled vehicles within 90 days. Since the Houck’s story became public, Hertz has stopped renting vehicles under recall notice.

Protect yourself, your passengers, and everyone on the road. If you are unsure whether a vehicle you are renting has been issued a recall, ask the rental agent to check if it has any outstanding recalls.

A case for e-scriptions

Ever wondered if bad handwriting is a prerequisite for medical school entry? It makes for a good laugh, but on a serious note, pharmacists often have trouble reading doctors’ handwriting, which leads to costly, and sometimes deadly, errors.

In fact, a recent study in the journal *PLoS ONE* reported that Australian hospitals that switched to an electronic prescribing system reduced prescription errors by 60 percent. While readability was an important factor, handwritten prescriptions can include miscalculated dosages and don’t alert pharmacy staff to potential drug interactions.

According to a survey by the Leapfrog Group, a nonprofit organization that has established quality and safety standards for health systems, only 17 percent of hospitals in the United States have computerized prescription programs.

Is your rental safe?

- **RECALL Roundup**

If you have kids, you probably already got the lightweight jackets out of storage for outdoor play. Be aware that a popular jacket sold at Ross Stores poses a safety hazard.

And as the weather turns cool, a cup of coffee or tea may hit the spot; just be sure your coffeepot and teapot haven’t been recalled.

**Tassimo Single-Cup Brewers**

Plastic T Discs that hold the coffee or tea can burst and spray hot liquid and coffee grounds or tea leaves onto consumers. Second-degree burns have been reported. The recall involves Tassimo brewers with the Bosch brand name and Tassimo Professional brewers.

www.tassimodirect.com/safetyrecall, (866) 918-8763

**Ganz Dancing Teapots**

The teapot’s handle can get extremely hot when there is hot water in the teapot, posing a burn hazard to consumers.

www.ganz.com, (800) 724-5902

**Umbro boys’ jackets sold at Ross Stores**

This recall involves boys’ nylon jackets sold in sizes medium to extra large that can fit children through size 14. “Umbro” is printed on the front upper right side of the jacket. The bottom of the jacket has a drawstring with toggles, which can create an entrapment hazard.

www.umbro.com, (866) 217-6800
Accidents happen all the time, and most can be chalked up to bad timing. But injuries can sometimes be directly attributed to the carelessness of another. In this case, the party or parties at fault should be responsible for paying damages (property as well as physical and emotional injuries) associated with the accident.

Personal injury law has a lot of gray areas, which is why people need an attorney. Basically, the plaintiff needs to prove they are injured and prove that someone else’s negligence caused the injury. Here are a few questions that lawyers suggest people ask themselves when deciding whether to call an attorney:

- Did the negligent actions of another cause the injury?
- Is there physical or mental injury, substantiated by a doctor, from the accident?
- Has the injury impacted employment or resulted in lost wages?
- Did injuries result in permanent disability or require ongoing treatment?
- Has the injury impacted everyday life?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, contact our office to discuss your options.

A natural part of the aging process includes a decline in the skill and physical attributes necessary to safely operate a vehicle. After the age of 70, most people experience reduced reaction time and declining eyesight—including reduced peripheral vision and an increase in the time it takes the eyes to focus.

The use of prescription medications can also interfere with driving ability. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that almost 70 percent of all participants reported using one or more prescription medications that can impair driving; however, only 28 percent of respondents knew the medications could impair driving. For these reasons, 28 states and Washington, D.C., require older drivers to undergo regular testing.

As baby boomers start to take an active role in the physical and financial care of aging parents, many are concerned that they may be held liable if an elderly parent causes an accident.

In most cases, they won’t be. As long as a parent has his or her own vehicle registered in their name, adult children, including those who live with or help finance aging parents, are not legally responsible for an accident caused by a parent—even when a child feels that a parent should no longer drive or knows that a parent has physical or mental limitations. The exception is if a child allows the parent to drive the child’s car.
Red-light cameras can be a valuable witness

If you or someone you know has been involved in a crash because another motorist failed to stop at a red light, you are not alone. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that there are over 2 million intersection crashes a year. According to the organization’s Fatality Analysis Reporting System, 700 deaths are caused by a driver running a red light at an intersection.

The use of red-light cameras can help law enforcement determine the cause of an accident, but it can also help injured parties prove liability. Who can argue with an impartial video that depicts exactly what happened?

We can obtain video evidence to support your case.

Should school buses have seat belts?

It’s time to put the kids back on the bus for a new school year. Did you ever wonder why most school buses don’t have the golden standard of vehicle safety—the seat belt?

Though some states do require large buses to use seat belts, most do not. The need is debatable. Because a school bus weighs tons and is large, students are generally above the point of impact. The impact from a collision is absorbed by the mass of the bus, so the crash force is less than in a passenger vehicle. Seat belts also could prevent children from exiting the bus quickly in an accident or in an emergency such as a flash flood.

According to the National Safety Council, the national school bus accident rate is 0.01 per 100 million miles traveled, compared to 0.04 for trains, 0.06 for commercial aviation, and 0.96 for other passenger vehicles. Ninety-six percent of the estimated 8,500 to 12,000 children injured in school bus accidents annually suffer minor injuries.

Seat belts don’t affect the most common form of fatal and serious school bus injuries: those that involve pedestrians. Ashley Zauflik, a student at Pennsbury High School in Pennsylvania was run over by an out-of-control school bus. The 17-year-old’s leg had to be amputated, she needed kidney support, and was even placed in a medically induced coma for treatment. She received a multimillion-dollar verdict in December of 2011.

Get tips on school bus safety at www.nhtsa.gov/School-Buses.