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With so many teens driving smaller, cheaper cars that offer little crash protection, the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety (IIHS) has compiled a list of recommended used cars for teen drivers.

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MLA
SAVANNAH GUTHRIE, anchor:
If you’ve got a young driver in the family, you want to listen up to this next story. A lot of teenagers are driving those smaller, cheaper cars that a lot of times have little crash protection or safety technology. So now the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety has compiled a list of recommended used cars specifically for teen drivers. Let's get right to NBC's Tom Costello who's following that story this morning. Tom, good morning.

TOM COSTELLO, reporting:
Hi, Savannah. Did your parents buy you a new car when you were a teen? And if so was, it a clunker or was it a good solid car? It turns out teens killed in car crashes are more likely to be driving smaller, older vehicles that don't provide the best protection in crashes.

It's a rite of passage for millions of teenagers every year. First the permit, the license, then the new wheels. But research suggests that teenagers are far too often driving cars that simply aren't safe enough.

In a new report, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety warns parents they could be sacrificing safety for affordability. The study finds twenty-eight percent of parents buy mini cars or small cars that often don't offer good crash protection. More than half of vehicles bought for teens were 2006 or older, lacking the latest safety technology. And even more, two-thirds of family hand-me-downs were 2006 or older. So what should parents of teen drivers be looking for? Experts say bigger and heavier is safer. Stay away from high horsepower engines and electronic stability control is critical.

ANNE MCCARTT (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety): It's compared to seatbelts in terms of the reduction and risk. Teens should not be driving a vehicle that-- without electronic stability control. It's a must.

COSTELLO: Because teens are already at risk, the Insurance Institute says it's worth paying a little more. It recommends two tiers of affordable vehicles. First, those under twenty thousand dollars. Large cars could include something like the Buick Regal 2011 or later. A mid-size could include the Honda Accord sedan. A small SUV, the Hyundai Tucson. Mini vans, the Toyota Sienna 2011 and later. Among those
cars under ten thousand dollars, large cars like the Acura RL, mid-sized cars like the Mazda 6, small SUVs like the Ford Escape. And minivans including the Kia Sedona, another big challenge, making sure the car you're buying for your teen has not been involved in a major safety recall. Amber Rose was the very first death associated with the Chevy Cobalt and the subsequent ignition switch recall. Her airbags failed to deploy.

LAURA CHRISTIAN (Amber's Birth Mother): I miss her very, very much. There's nothing that I wouldn't give to just have her back, even if it was just for a day.

COSTELLO: The advice? Check Carfax and the federal registry to make sure any used car you're buying has not been involved in an accident or a recall.

MCCARTT: We would urge parents to think about the high crash risk of teen drivers and try to spend a little more.

COSTELLO: Meanwhile, adding a teen to a married couple's insurance typically means an insurance goes up by seventy-nine percent. According to insurancequotes.com, teenage boys much more expensive than girls. The premium increase are the highest for sixteen-year-olds, up ninety-six percent for sixteen-year-olds. Guys back to you.

GUTHRIE: All right, Tom, thank you very much.

MATT LAUER, anchor: I can't believe I'm three years away from this.

GUTHRIE: I know.

LAUER: It's scary. It really is.