

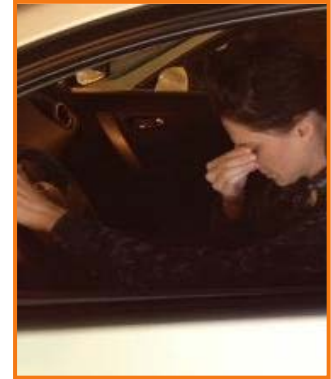


Drowsy Driving Prevention

How to Prevent Drowsy Driving Crashes

What is the Problem?

Each year, thousands of automobile crashes occur due to drowsy driving.¹ Sleepiness or as it is often referred to drowsiness, is the need to fall asleep.² Sleep can be irresistible and contributes to an increase in human errors in a variety of settings including driving.³ Driving while sleepy/drowsy impairs your reaction time, vigilance, attention, and information processing.⁴



Risk Factors that Contribute to Drowsy Driving Crashes⁵

- Lack of sleep (quantity), lack of restful sleep (quality).
- Use of sleep medications or any other medications that have a side effect of drowsiness.
- Consumption of alcohol.
- Untreated or unrecognized sleep disorders.
- Driving patterns (late at night, long periods of time with no break, etc.).

Who is at Risk?⁶

The following three population groups are at highest risk for driving drowsy:

- Young Adults (ages 16 to 29), especially males.
- Individuals with untreated sleep apnea syndrome (SAS) and narcolepsy.
- Shift workers whose sleep is disrupted by working at night or working long or irregular hours.

Prevention Tips⁷

To prevent/reduce the risk of drowsy driving and its consequences, follow these tips:

- Plan to get sufficient sleep.
- Do not drink even small amounts of alcohol when sleepy or driving for longer times and distances.
- Limit driving between midnight and 6 a.m.
- If feeling sleepy, pull over and take a short nap (15 to 20 minutes) in a location such as a monitored rest-stop or well-lit area.
- Consult your physician if you regularly feel tired so he/she will be able to detect/manage any illnesses that can cause sleepiness (e.g., SAS and narcolepsy).



Plan of the Week (POW):

In today's society, individuals give sleep less priority than other activities. Current lack of knowledge of the importance of sleep and attitudes regarding sleep cause many Americans to get inadequate sleep either occasionally (acute sleepiness) or routinely (chronic sleepiness).⁸ Young adults with untreated sleep apnea syndrome (SAS) or narcolepsy, and shift workers are at the highest risk for having an automobile accident due to sleepiness/drowsiness.⁹ **NEVER** drive if you have consumed sedatives or alcohol and **NEVER** drive if you have been awake for several days.¹⁰ **ALWAYS** plan to get a sufficient amount of sleep, see your physician regularly, and limit driving late at night into the early hours of the morning.¹¹

References

- 1-11 Drowsy Driving and Automobile Crashes. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/drowsy_driving1/Drowsy.html. 09 March 2006. Accessed 14 May 2013.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

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