



American Academy of Sleep Medicine

Drowsy driving, the dangerous combination of sleepiness and driving or driving while fatigued, and can result from many underlying causes, including excessive sleepiness, sleep deprivation, changes in circadian rhythm due to shift work, fatigue, medications with sedatives and consuming alcohol when tired. The cumulative effects of these factors have severe effects on performance, alertness, memory, concentration and reaction times.

Drowsy Driving is a growing problem in the United States, and the risk, danger and often tragic outcomes of drowsy driving are sobering. According to a survey, nine of 10 police officers reported stopping a driver who they believed was drunk but turned out to be drowsy. Further, data indicate 80,000 individuals fall asleep at the wheel each day and there are more than 250,000 sleep-related motor vehicle accidents each year. It is estimated that twenty percent of all serious transportation injuries on the nation's highways are related to sleep.

Who is at Risk for Driving while Drowsy?

- Young people, particularly males
- Shift workers
- People who work long hours
- Commercial drivers, especially those who drive a significant number of miles at night
- Sleep deprived individuals
- Persons with undiagnosed or untreated sleep disorders
- Those who have consumed alcohol
- People taking prescription medication that contain sedatives

Tips to avoid becoming drowsy while driving:

- *Get enough sleep*
American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends adults get seven to eight hours of sleep each night in order to maintain good health and optimum performance.
- *Take breaks while driving*
If one becomes drowsy while driving, it is recommended he or she pulls off to a rest area and takes a short nap, preferably 15 to 20 minutes in length.
- *Do not drink alcohol*
Alcohol can further impair a person's ability to stay awake and make decisions; taking the wheel after having just one glass of alcohol can affect one's level of fatigue.
- *Do not drive late at night*
Avoid driving after midnight, which is a natural period of sleepiness.

Statistics:

- One in five adults reports getting insufficient sleep.
- Problems falling asleep or daytime sleepiness affect 35 to 40 percent of the population.
- Driver sleepiness is related to one in five serious motor vehicle injuries.
- More than 50 million Americans suffer from a chronic sleep disorder.

AASM is a professional membership association dedicated to advancing sleep healthcare by setting clinical standards for the field; advocating for the recognition, diagnosis and treatment of sleep disorders; educating professionals dedicated to providing optimal sleep healthcare; and fostering the development and application of scientific knowledge.

Sleepeducation.com, a Web site maintained by the AASM, provides information about various sleep disorders, forms of treatment available, recent news on the topic of sleep, studies that have been conducted and a listing of sleep centers.