

DROWSY DRIVING: KNOW THE RISK

Fatigue can impair attention, judgment, reaction time and control. A driver does not have to feel completely asleep to be unsafe.

8.8%-9.5%	of all crashes in a large naturalistic-driving study involved observable drowsiness.
10.6%-10.8%	of crashes serious enough to be reported to police involved observable drowsiness.
11.5x	the crash rate after less than 4 hours of sleep, compared with at least 7 hours.

SLEEP LOSS AND CRASH RISK

Compared with drivers who slept at least 7 hours in the previous 24 hours, AAA Foundation research found progressively higher crash rates as sleep decreased:

Sleep in prior 24 hours	Crash rate
6-7 hours	1.3 times
5-6 hours	1.9 times
4-5 hours	4.3 times
Less than 4 hours	11.5 times

17 HOURS AWAKE	Performance impairment similar to a BAC of 0.05%
24 HOURS AWAKE	Performance impairment similar to a BAC of 0.10%

WHO IS AT HIGHER RISK?

- ✓ Teen and young adult drivers
- ✓ Shift workers and people driving after overnight or extended work
- ✓ Commercial drivers and people who drive for work
- ✓ People with untreated sleep disorders, including sleep apnea
- ✓ People taking medications that cause sleepiness
- ✓ Anyone driving after too little sleep or after being awake for a long time

WHEN RISK RISES

- ✓ Midnight to 6 a.m. and the late afternoon - natural low-alertness periods
- ✓ Long, monotonous drives; rural roads and highways
- ✓ After overnight, rotating or extended shifts

- ✓ Even on familiar or short trips: roughly half of drivers in one NHTSA survey who most recently nodded off had driven an hour or less

YOUR BODY GIVES YOU WARNINGS

- ✓ Frequent yawning or blinking
- ✓ Heavy eyelids, trouble focusing or difficulty keeping your head up
- ✓ Drifting from your lane, hitting a rumble strip or missing signs and exits
- ✓ Difficulty remembering the last few miles
- ✓ Restlessness, irritability or repeated speed changes

FACTS, MYTHS AND SAFE CHOICES

The warning signs are your cue to act immediately - not a challenge to push through.

MYTH: Opening a window or turning up music will keep me safe.

TRUTH: These may feel stimulating briefly, but they do not replace sleep.

MYTH: I can tell exactly when I am about to fall asleep.

TRUTH: Drowsy drivers often underestimate impairment. A microsleep can happen with little warning.

MYTH: Caffeine makes it safe to continue indefinitely.

TRUTH: Caffeine may help temporarily, but it is not a substitute for adequate sleep.

MYTH: Drowsy driving only happens late at night.

TRUTH: It can happen at any time, especially during natural low-alertness periods and after insufficient sleep.

MYTH: I am almost home, so I can push through.

TRUTH: Distance does not protect you. One nod of the head or microsleep can change a life forever.

IF YOU BECOME DROWSY WHILE DRIVING

- ✓ Do not bargain for one more mile. Leave the roadway and stop in a safe, legal place.
- ✓ Change drivers or arrange a ride when possible.
- ✓ A short nap and, for adults who can safely consume it, caffeine may provide temporary help - but adequate sleep is the real solution.
- ✓ Before a trip, get sufficient sleep, review medication warnings and plan breaks or an overnight stop.

ONE MICRO-SLEEP. ONE NOD OF THE HEAD. ONE LIFE-CHANGING CRASH.

Sources

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety: Acute Sleep Deprivation and Risk of Motor Vehicle Crash Involvement; Prevalence of Drowsy Driving Crashes: Estimates from a Large-Scale Naturalistic Driving Study; Countermeasures to Reduce Drowsy Driving. CDC/NIOSH: Impairments Due to Sleep Deprivation Are Similar to Impairments Due to Alcohol Intoxication. NHTSA: Drowsy Driving and Countermeasures That Work. Source links and publication dates should be reviewed during each annual update.