

Drowsy Driving Awareness

Drowsy driving is dangerous and often results in injury or death. Falling asleep at the wheel or the inability to pay adequate attention while driving may be a result of being sleep deprived. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that every year there are 100,000 drowsy driving crashes reported to police costing 12.5 billion.

When Is It Most Likely To Happen?

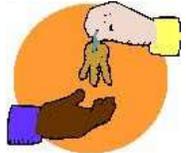
Most drowsy driving crashes happen at predictable times. We are most likely to feel fatigued, and our risk of being involved in a drowsy driving-related crash increases between 1 pm - 4 pm and 2 am - 6 am.

Who's At Risk?

According to the National Sleep Foundation, 51% of adults reported that they have driven while drowsy, and 17% reported falling asleep at the wheel in the past year. Working late night shifts, taking care of young children, or managing hectic schedules can all be risk factors for drowsy driving. In addition, those who stay awake through the night, such as those who are working, driving, or students who stay awake studying for an exam, are at an increased risk for being in a crash.

Warning Signs of Drowsy Driving

Yawning, inability to keep eyes open and head raised, not remembering the last few miles traveled, drifting out of the lane, or hitting rumble strips are all indications that a driver should pull over in a safe area to nap or switch drivers.



What Can Be Done?

If you begin to feel drowsy, find a safe rest area to pull into and take a nap. This is more effective than opening the window, turning up the radio, or using caffeine to stay awake. It takes approximately 30 minutes for caffeine to take effect, and the relief is temporary. If fatigued after a shift, try to find a quiet place to sleep before getting on the road or ask someone to pick you up. **The only long-lasting solution is to get adequate sleep.**

Getting Better Sleep

On average, Americans have a sleep cycle that requires 8 hours of sleep. In today's fast-paced world, it can be difficult to get adequate sleep; however, we all need to make this a priority. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle helps to promote good quality sleep. The following can improve sleep quality:

- Regular exercise -- promotes sleep when done at least 3 hours prior to bedtime.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine around bedtime -- alcohol increases the number of nighttime awakenings while caffeine and nicotine act as stimulants, which disrupt sleep.
- Consistent sleep patterns – waking up and going to bed at the same time daily, even on the weekends, encourages healthy sleep.

For more information on the importance of sleep and the effects of drowsy driving, visit these web sites:

National Sleep Foundation www.sleepfoundation.org and www.drowsydriving.org
New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee SafeNY.ny.gov/drow-ndx.htm
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration www.nhtsa.dot.gov
AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety www.aaafoundation.org

New York State Department of Health Bureau of Injury Prevention
Riverview Center - 150 Broadway, Suite 302
Albany, New York 12204
P (518) 473-1143 F (518) 474-3067 Email: injury@health.state.ny.us