

Drowsy Driving

By: Tamara | Published on: Dec 30, 2018 | Categories: Research |





RIDE SHARING SERVICE PROVIDERS

Ride sharing services like Uber and Lyft have regulations to ensure their drivers take breaks, however the AASM (American Academy of Sleep Medicine) consider these insufficient amounts of rest and often drivers have multiple jobs, increasing their sleep debt even further.



BUSINESS TRAVELERS

Frequent travelers who may be suffering from jet lag and spending long hours behind the wheel.



PEOPLE WITH SLEEP DISORDERS

People with untreated obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) are up to seven times more likely to have a drowsy driving crash. For some people insomnia can increase fatigue.



AM I TOO DROWSY TO DRIVE?



<input type="checkbox"/> Yawning and eye rubbing	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inability to keep eyes open	
<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble keeping your head up	
<input type="checkbox"/> Inability remembering last few miles of driving	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ending up too close to nearby cars	
<input type="checkbox"/> Missing road signs or turns	
<input type="checkbox"/> Drifting into other lanes or onto shoulder rumble strips	
<input type="checkbox"/> Awake for longer than 18 hours	

DROWSY DANGER



If you experience any of these symptoms, you are too drowsy to drive!

FACT OR FICTION

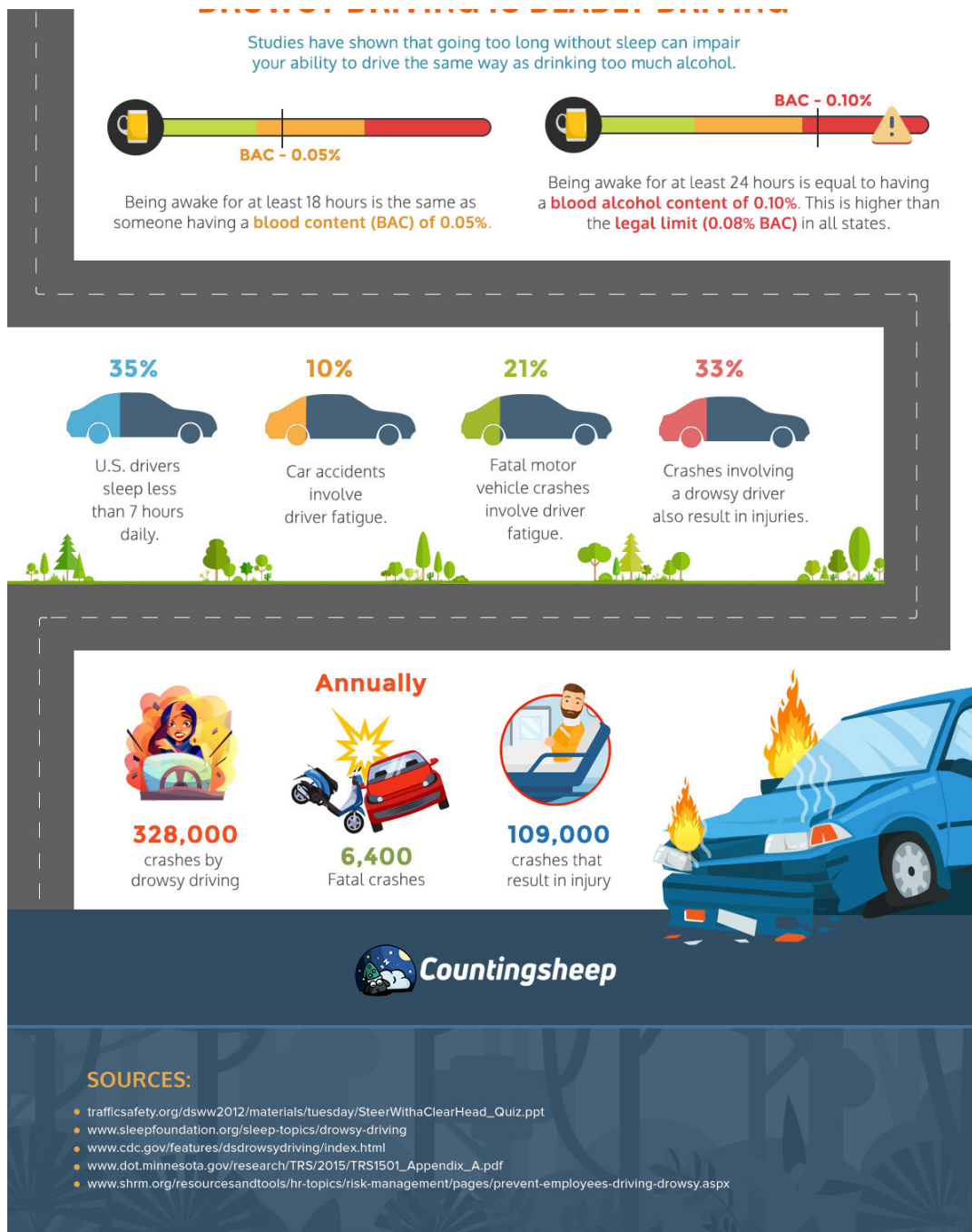
MYTH	FACT
 <p>Drowsy driving will not impair my ability to drive safely.</p>	 <p>Being awake for 18 hours is equal to a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.05% and accounts for 21% of motor vehicle deaths every year.</p>
 <p>Energy drinks can keep a drowsy driver alert.</p>	 <p>Caffeinated beverages help people feel more alert, but the effects last only for a</p>

		
	Safe drivers don't have to worry about drowsy driving.	Sleep deprivation can result in carelessness. To be a safe driver, stay off the road when sleepy.
	Falling asleep at the wheel is uncommon.	Approximately 1 of 25 adults surveyed reported falling asleep while driving in the past 30 days.
	Turning up the radio, opening a window or blasting the AC can keep a driver awake.	These "aids" are ineffective and can add more danger to the driver
	Tired driving is not as bad as drunk driving.	Going without sleep for 21 hours is as dangerous as being over the legal blood alcohol content limit (BAC 0.10%), and causes the same level of impairment.
	Young people don't need as much sleep.	Half of drowsy driving accidents are caused by drivers less than 25 years old.

PREVENTION TIPS



DROWSY DRIVING IS DEADLY DRIVING



If you ever got behind the wheel while feeling sleepy, you should know that you are not alone. Unfortunately, drowsy driving is a **major problem in the US**, and studies show that around 60% of people did it at least once, and approximately one-third of people have fallen asleep at the wheel. Driving while feeling tired or drowsy may seem harmless, but it actually has severe consequences. No one knows the exact moment when sleep comes over their body. Therefore, you can quickly get into an accident and hurt yourself and others.

It is important to know that [sleep deprivation](#) has similar effects on your body as drinking alcohol. For example, when it comes to drowsy driving vs. drunk driving, being awake for 18 hours will make you drive like you have a BAC of 0.05%. To be clear, by law, 0.08% is considered drunk. If you haven't slept for 24 hours, it's like you have a BAC of 0.10. Drowsy driving mostly occurs when a driver didn't get enough sleep, but it can also happen due to medications, shift work or untreated [sleep disorders](#).

What Is Drowsy Driving?

Drowsy driving is also known as driver's fatigue, and it occurs when an individual is too tired to operate a motor vehicle. Due to this, the driver puts himself and others at risk. Some of the most common causes of drowsy driving are inadequate sleep, untreated sleeping disorders such as [narcolepsy](#) and sleep apnea, shift work, driving without making regular breaks and the use of sedatives, hypnotics and other medications that may negatively affect your alertness and induce sleepiness.

The effects of driver's fatigue can vary from person to person, but most of them have slower reaction times and experience short-term [memory loss](#) while driving. Drivers can also sometimes drive [aggressively](#).

Who Is at Risk for Drowsy Driving?

Every driver is at risk, but the issue is more common among certain groups.

Young Drivers

Inexperience combined with sleepiness and tendency to drive at night particularly puts at risk young males aged 16 to 25. [Sleep deprivation](#) is another crucial factor. Most adults require seven to eight hours of quality sleep per night, but young adults require at least nine in order to achieve the same levels of functionality. However, an average adult gets only between 5 to 7 hours of sleep per night.

Young adults are encouraged to develop a healthy sleep schedule and to avoid alcohol and electronics at night to reduce the risks of [drowsy driving](#).

Inadequate sleep, tobacco, alcohol consumption and using electronic devices at night are one of the leading causes of sleep deprivation among individuals aged from 16 to 25.

Shift Workers

Shift work is any work schedule that falls outside the standard work time of 9 am to 5 pm. Shift work may include night shifts, double shifts, or rotating shifts. In most cases, shift work is done where round-the-clock personnel is needed, such as in law enforcement and healthcare.

There are ways shift workers can reduce the risks of drowsy driving. For example, ride sharing will reduce their time behind the wheel each week. Also, long or [overtime shifts should be avoided](#) if they plan on driving long miles.

Commercial Drivers

Commercial drivers typically drive high miles, and at night, and due to this, they are particularly at risk for fall-asleep crashes. In order to decrease the risk of drowsy driving, commercial drivers shouldn't operate their vehicles between 12 am to 6 am, and 2 pm to 4 pm because these are the period when most people get sleepy. It is essential for them to take regular breaks, [napping](#) for at least 20 minutes and then allowing an extra 15 minutes to wake up. [Power naps can help](#) them a lot to restore energy, and increase their alertness.

Ride Sharing Service Providers

Although companies such as Uber and Lyft have regulations which involve their drivers to take regular breaks, they often work a second job which further increases their sleep debt.

Business Travelers

Business trips typically involve long journeys, in the case of international travels, and when you always have to adjust to the local time, it may affect

your [circadian rhythm](#) and [sleep cycle](#). The transition period or jet lag can especially be tricky and cause sleepiness.

To prevent or lower the risks of drowsy driving, business travelers should go to and from airports using car services. The [effects of jet lag](#) can also be reduced by gradually adjusting to the local time of the place you're going to stay in. It is best to try to follow a [sleep schedule](#) that aligns with the time zone of your destination. Avoiding alcohol, smoking, and caffeinated beverages will also help to ease the effects of jet lag.

People with Untreated Sleep Disorders

Many sleep disorders can cause drowsiness. The [most common sleep disorders](#) that cause sleepiness are insomnia, sleep apnea and narcolepsy. A driver with an undiagnosed [sleep disorder](#) is at high risk of causing or being involved in a motor vehicle accident. For example, people with untreated obstructive sleep apnea are [seven times more likely to fall asleep](#) behind the wheel. Insomnia also increases fatigue.

Am I too Drowsy to Drive?

Same as drunk driving, drowsy driving makes it very hard to pay attention to the road and slows down your reaction time. Although sleep deprivation has similar effects on your brain as drinking alcohol, drowsy driving and drunk driving don't always look the same on the road. A drunk driver may drive slowly and try to react, while a sleepy driver can nod off while still going very fast. Since sleep deprivation significantly slows down your reaction time, drowsy drivers won't always break when something happens right in front of them.

The best way to prevent drowsy driving is to learn to recognize its signs. If you believe your fatigue level may be impacting your driving, here are some of the warning signs of drowsy driving you should look out for, no matter whether you are the driver or a passenger.

- Inability to focus
- Constantly yawning

- Heavy eyelids
- Bobbing your head
- Drifting from your lane
- Missing signs and turns

If you notice such behavior, it is vital to safely pull over the car and take a 20-minute nap. Also, buy a cup of coffee to stay more alert. If there is another driver in the car, let him or her to drive instead of you. If you are driving long miles, you should drive during your most alert period of the day and take regular breaks. These precautions seem simple, but they can help a lot to lower the risk of falling asleep behind the wheel and causing a drowsy driving accident.

Ways to Keep Yourself Up While Driving – Drowsy Driving Prevention

The best ways to prevent drowsy driving is to get some sleep. Before driving long miles, you have to get enough sleep and take breaks every few hours to rest. By learning to recognize signs of drowsiness and fatigue, you could avoid [driving sleep deprived](#).

Avoid Driving

If you know your circadian rhythm is generally unstable or naturally drowsy, you have to avoid operating a vehicle, especially if you plan to drive for long miles.

Caffeinate Wisely

Never forget that coffee and other [caffeinated beverages are not a replacement for sleep](#)! Coffee and energy drinks can temporarily help you stay alert and improve your focus, but keep in mind that these effects last only for 30 minutes, and also require around half an hour to kick in.

Sleep Tight

Before going on a long road, get a good night's sleep! This is the best way to ensure you won't feel tired or drowsy on the road.

Drive Together

In most cases, drowsy driving accidents are caused by drivers who were driving alone. Therefore, if you are going on a long trip, bring a friend with you. A recent UCLA study found that bringing a friend can significantly decrease your chances of falling asleep at the wheel. Also, if your passenger has a license, he can replace you once you become sleepy.

Take a Break

When you need to get a nap, use a rest stop. A rest stop is a safe space to park your car and take a nap, grab a bite, and similar. Consuming a caffeinated beverage may also help you to stay alert. However, you should keep in mind that coffee and energy drinks will make you feel refreshed only for 15 to 20 minutes. Never forget that caffeine is not a replacement for sleep.

Check Your Meds

If you take medications regularly, it's important to read the warning labels and see if they might affect your alertness or cause sleepiness. Medicines don't have to be particularly prescribed for sleep disorders in order to induce drowsiness. Medication types such as narcotic pain relief pills, antidepressants, tranquilizers, antihistamines, and muscle relaxants can trigger sleepiness.

Bring in Some Fresh Air

Being in stuffy car interiors can easily make us sleepy. So, getting plenty of fresh air can also help to increase your alertness. Make sure to occasionally open the car windows or adjust the vent controls to bring in some fresh air.

Listen to Music

Listen to music, especially if you are driving alone. Rather than listening to loud music, we recommend listening to energetic music. This is also one of the ways to prevent falling asleep while driving.

Drive with the Sun

Whenever possible, drive during the day, or even better, when the sun rises. Sun will stimulate [melatonin production](#) and your circadian rhythm, keeping you more awake and alert during the day. Sunlight stimulates your brain and will also extend your reaction time while at the wheel. Lastly, natural sunlight is an excellent source of vitamin D, which can help you sleep better at night.

Is Driving While Drowsy Illegal?

Driver's fatigue can put you in jail. In most states, there isn't a law that specifically relates to drowsy driving, but it's mostly considered as a form of reckless driving, similar as driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

By acting as a responsible driver and educating yourself about the risks and warning signs of drowsy driving, you will avoid being a part of the 328,000 [drowsy driving accidents](#) that occur every year. The NHTSA and the CDC estimate that 109,000 of those crashes results in injuries, while 6,400 result in death. Also, don't forget that we mentioned sleep-deprived driving is very similar to driving under the influence. Being awake for 24 hours straight is equal to a BAC of 0.10%, and that significantly higher than the legal limit of 0.08% in all US states.



Tamara

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