

# DRIVING TIRED – THE DANGERS!

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BY EUGENE HERBERT

The effects of fatigue can't be over emphasised. Tired drivers will have slower reaction times, reduced awareness of their surroundings and unlike the COPS in the movies, who stay awake for 48 hours, they have difficulty processing information. In extreme cases, fatigue can cause a driver to fall into a 'micro sleep' where they lose consciousness for several seconds, or to completely fall asleep at the wheel.

In the interests of road safety, MasterDrive is sharing some tips on what can be done to fight fatigue.

## 1. Get enough sleep

Although it varies by each person, on average, most adults need between 7 and 8 hours of sleep each night. You can tell whether you are getting the right amount of sleep by how you feel during the day. If you feel drowsy you probably have not had enough.

## 2. Be aware of 'tired' hours

Avoid, where possible, driving at times when you would usually be asleep. If possible, you should also avoid driving during peak times of sleepiness. This is the early hours of the morning (typically before sunrise) and during afternoon 'dips' of 2pm – 4pm.

## 3. Consider lifestyle factors

If you feel sleepy during the day, you should consider whether your lifestyle is contributing to your tiredness.

Think about factors such as:

- Shift working
- Family responsibilities, such as a new baby
- Socialising in the evening
- Medication
- Stress

By examining what makes you feel tired, you can take action to cut out or reduce the impact of these factors. Consult your doctor if you have any doubts about the cause and after adjusting you don't see a difference.

#### **4. Look for warning signs**

Tiredness does not occur suddenly, but creeps up on us gradually with a number of warning signs. It is vital that you look out for these warning signs and take notice of your body. If it is telling you that you are tired, **then you MUST NOT DRIVE.**

Warning signs of driving while tired include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Yawning
- Trouble keeping your eyes open – and no, unlike Mr Bean, matchsticks don't work.
- Neck muscles relaxing, causing your head to droop
- Difficulty remembering driving the last few kilometres
- Frequent blinking
- Varying speed for no reason
- Drifting over lane markings

#### **5. Plan regular breaks**

Incorporate a 15 minute break for every 2 hours of driving in your journey. Plan ahead to identify rest locations where it is safe to park and get out of your vehicle for fresh air while you stretch your legs.

#### **6. Take action!**

If you begin to feel sleepy while driving you **MUST** take a break from driving. Even if you are not 'due' a break. Pull over in a safe place (never on the side of the highway) as soon as it is safe to do so and take a 15-minute power nap. Ideally, take the opportunity to get out of your vehicle to stretch your legs and get some fresh air.

Never rely on 'quick fixes' such as coffee, energy drinks or winding down the window as methods of staying awake. The only solution to tiredness is sleep.

#### **7. Avoid drugs and alcohol**

Never drink any alcohol or take any drugs when driving. Both substances are highly dangerous when driving as they have a vast number of side effects – including fatigue. Even a very small amount of alcohol (under the legal drink drive limit) can make you feel sleepy.

You should also refrain from alcohol and drugs the night before driving as you could still be impaired the morning after.

## **8. Check medicines**

some prescription and over-the-counter medicines can affect driving by causing drowsiness or slowing reaction times.

These can include:

- Cough medicines
- Hay fever remedies
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-nausea treatments
- Painkillers

Till next time – drive safe and get adequate rest before getting behind the wheel