

ROSPA

*The Royal Society for the
Prevention of Accidents*

Safer journey planner



Falling Asleep at the Wheel

Thousands of crashes are caused by tired drivers. They are most likely to happen:

- on long journeys on monotonous roads, such as motorways
- between 2:00 am and 6:00 am
- between 2:00 pm and 4 pm (especially after eating, or drinking even one alcoholic drink)
- after having less sleep than normal
- after drinking alcohol
- if taking medicines that cause drowsiness
- on journeys home after night shifts

Sleepiness reduces reaction time, alertness, concentration and decision making, all crucial driving skills.

Tired drivers are much more likely to have an accident, and the crash is likely to be severe because a drowsy or sleeping driver does not usually brake or swerve before the impact.



Plan Your Journey

A planned journey reduces the risk of drowsiness and falling asleep at the wheel, and is more efficient, saving you time, stress and money.

Mode of Travel

If possible, make long journeys by train, bus, coach or air, as these are safer (mile for mile) than road travel.

Time

Consider how long the journey will take, including time for rest breaks and unexpected delays. Avoid driving in the early hours of the morning, when you have had less sleep than normal, or in mid afternoon after eating a large meal - these are peak times for sleep related accidents. Avoid starting a long journey after a full day's (or shift's) work.

Plan Your Route

Write out a route plan that you can easily read. Check for roadworks or likely traffic jams, and if possible, plan an alternative route to avoid any major delays. Plan where to stop for regular rest breaks (every two hours, or sooner if feeling tired, for at least 15 to 20 minutes).

Overnight Stop

Consider breaking your journey with an overnight stop. If you are catching an early flight or returning from abroad - make it part of your holiday.



Second Driver

If possible, share the driving with a second driver.

Sleep

Try not to stay up late or reduce your normal sleep before a long journey.



Alcohol

Alcohol stays in the body for several hours and will make you more sleepy, so avoid having even one drink.



Medicines

If you are taking any medication, check whether it causes drowsiness. If it does, ask your doctor or pharmacist for an alternative that does not cause drowsiness.



Check Your Vehicle

Make sure everything's working properly, especially the tyres, lights, windscreen wipers, and all fluid levels.

If You Begin to Feel Tired

If you start to feel sleepy while driving, this means that you are more likely to crash. Many drivers try to stay awake by turning up the air conditioning, winding down the window, listening to the radio, talking or singing. These will only work for a few minutes, to give you time to find somewhere safe to stop.



They Will Not Stop You Falling Asleep

If you begin to feel tired:

- Do not try to complete the journey (you might never arrive)
- Find somewhere safe to stop (not the hard shoulder)
- Drink one or two cups of strong coffee or other high caffeine drinks
- Take a nap of about 15 minutes

But remember, sleep is the only cure for tiredness. So, if necessary, find somewhere safe to stay overnight.

Journey Planner

Do you have to drive?

NO

Go by Rail, Air, Bus or Coach - it's safer

YES

Plan the journey

Share the driving if possible

Ensure your vehicle is in a safe condition

Make sure you're not impaired by alcohol or drugs

Make sure you will be well rested

Book an overnight stop if necessary

Avoid driving in peak sleepiness periods

Plan the route

Avoid driving when you would normally be asleep

Plan where to take rest-breaks - at least every 2 hours

Plan where to stop for the night, if necessary

Check for delays - plan alternative routes

During the journey

Take rest breaks as planned

Listen to traffic news for possible delays

Concentrate on your driving

If you start to feel tired

Find somewhere safe to stop

Take two strong caffeine drinks

Nap for about 15 minutes

Too tired to continue? Find somewhere safe to stop overnight