



SNOOZE NEWS!

Published by Sleep Services of America, Inc.

Nov./Dec. 2004

Volume 1, Issue 5

Drowsy Driving Focus: Danger is steep when driving with too little sleep!

“Sleeping at the wheel” is a term you’re probably familiar with. You know that driving while you’re sleepy or fatigued can be very dangerous and even deadly, but did you know the staggering statistics behind drowsing driving? The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that approximately 100,000 police-reported crashes annually involve drowsiness or fatigue as a principal causal factor. Here’s some important information about drowsing driving and more importantly, some things you can do to stay alert and stay alive behind the wheel!

NHTSA driving survey

The NHTSA conducted its first national telephone survey that focused on distracted and drowsy driving in the spring of 2002. The questionnaire was administered to a national sample of 4,010 drivers (ages 16 and older). The objectives were to improve our general knowledge of distracted and drowsy driving, to understand how serious the public considers these problems, and to determine what countermeasures they find acceptable to control drowsy driving.

The survey asked drivers about drowsy driving and found that overall, slightly more than one-third (37%) of the driving population said that they have nodded off while driving at some time in their lives. Males were almost

twice as likely as females (49% vs. 26%) to report falling asleep at the wheel. Younger drivers (those under 21) and older drivers (those over 64) were less likely to report nodding off while driving (18% and 30%, respectively). About 8% of drivers report nodding off within the past six months. About 44% of all drivers who were involved in a drowsy-driving related crash are in their 20s yet they make up about 15% of the driving population; about 70% of these drivers are males.

Respondents’ most recent drowsy driving incident

The NHTSA survey reported the following characteristics of the respondents’ last drowsy driving episode.

Time of day. Only 28% of driv-



ers reported that their drowsy driving experience occurred between the hours of midnight and 6:00 am. Another 26% report that their last drowsy driving experience occurred between noon and 5:00 pm, while 17% said they nodded off between 5:00 pm and 9:00 pm.

Time spent behind wheel.

About 22% of drivers had been on the road for five or more hours, while nearly half (47%) had been driving for an hour or less.

Hours slept the night before.

About one quarter of drivers (24%) report having just four or less hours of sleep the night before their most recent drowsy driving episode.

Use of alcohol or medications.

Only 2% of drivers report having had alcohol before their most recent drowsy episode. About 12% report taking allergy or other medications prior to their trip.

Sleep Facts:

How Do We Know When to Fall Asleep?

The body is a truly remarkable mechanism and can be compared to a precision timepiece. Our “biological clocks” are set early in life and run according to very precise rhythms.

Our internal clock, or circadian rhythm, is regulated by a small portion of the brain. Though many of these rhythms are in a sense pre-programmed, there are other triggers to which we respond and which affect our sleep patterns. These include light levels, time cues and even the release from our brain of certain hormonal substances. Modify or disturb the timing of any of these influences and the body can become confused and react accordingly.

Even a small incremental time shift can be noticeable – and unavoidable. For instance, twice a year most of us shift between standard and daylight savings time. Many of us often have some degree of difficulty making even this minor transition and find our bodies perhaps taking days or even weeks to adjust.

Jet lag is another common malady and is a direct result of the body’s inability to adjust to changes in time. These same symptoms show up in people who work night shifts and even among those who live in northern climates and are deprived of adequate sunlight.

To a degree, we are in a position to influence our rhythms. Self-imposed factors such as caffeine, tobacco, alcohol, lifestyle, environment and schedules can upset our ability to get a good night’s rest. Remember: moderation and consistency can help alleviate some of our sleep deficiencies. **SN**

(continued on pg. 2)

Drowsy Driving, cont'd. from pg. 1

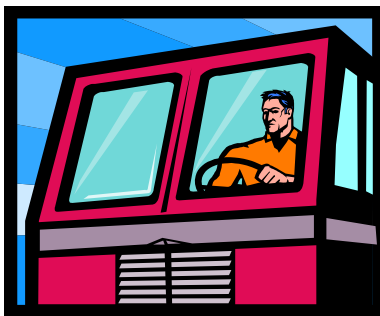
Dangerous and deadly consequences

The Governor's Traffic Safety Committee of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (NYS-DMV) website states that at least 71,000 people are injured in fall-asleep crashes each year and that these crashes represent \$12.5 billion in monetary losses each year. Additionally, drowsiness and fatigue may play a role in crashes that are often attributed to other causes. About one million crashes annually - one-sixth of all crashes - are thought to be caused by driver inattention. Sleep deprivation and fatigue make these lapses of attention more likely to occur.

Who is most at risk for drowsy driving?

The NYS-DMV website provides a breakdown of the driver groups most at risk for drowsy driving:

Young Adults - Because of a variety of factors including school, part-time jobs, late night television and a busy social life, young adults between the ages of 16-24 get less sleep than any other age group. This leads to a sleep deficit that puts young adults at high risk for driving while drowsy.



Truck Drivers (Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers)

- In addition to a high number of miles driven, truck drivers often drive at night when the body is tired. Working all day before driving, driving long distances without stopping for breaks, taking medication, and driving alone on long, rural roadways also put commercial motor vehicle drivers at increased

risk for fall-asleep crashes. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) estimates that 31 percent of commercial driver deaths and 58 percent of single-truck crashes are fatigue related.

Shift Workers - A person's biological clock is naturally attuned to sleep during the night. It is normal to experience a dip in alertness in mid-afternoon and a much stronger dip in alertness between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. when sleep is most irresistible. Shift workers often work during the times that are normally sleep hours. They may also be required to sleep in noisy daytime environments, or they may need to attend to family or social obligations during the day, further depriving them of sleep.



Sleep apnea & drowsy driving

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), a sleep and breathing disorder, is a serious condition that affects 18 million Americans. A person with sleep apnea may suffer from excessive daytime sleepiness, which may make him or her more apt to drive while drowsy. A person with sleep apnea stops breathing from 10 to 60 seconds at a time, up to 120 times an hour, while he or she sleeps. As a result, oxygen levels in the bloodstream fall, which in turn may lead to a host of serious medical conditions. A person with sleep apnea may have many symptoms, including loud, irregular snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness. For more information on sleep apnea, you can visit www.sleepservices.net or consult your physician. He or she may refer you to a professional sleep lab for diagnosis and treatment.

For Tips on Preventing Drowsy Driving, please see page 4.

(Sources: The NHTSA website @ http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/traffic_tech/2003/TT279.htm and <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Archive/safesobr/OPlanner/protection/safe.html>; and the NYS Dept. of Motor Vehicle site @ <http://www.nysgtsc.state.ny.us/drow-ndx.htm#warn>)

Tips On Preventing Drowsy Driving

The NHTSA website (<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/Archive/safesobr/OPlanner/protection/safe.html>) offers the following advice to **prevent drowsy driving** and to keep you and others safe on the road.

- Begin your journey with a good night's sleep.
- Avoid driving during late night and early morning hours, which are the body's natural sleep times.
- Set realistic travel goals about the time it will take to reach your destination.
- Eat healthy meals. Avoid foods high in fat and sugar, which can contribute to fatigue.
- Avoid using alcohol or drugs.
- Share the driving. Switch drivers about every two hours, even if you don't feel tired.
- Take regular breaks. Stop every two hours to stretch.
- Drink water, juice, or a soft drink low in sugar and caffeine. Sugar and caffeine promote short-term alertness but may increase drowsiness over longer periods of time.
- Keep the inside of your vehicle at a cool temperature.
- Listen to radio talk shows rather than music. The discussion format will help keep you alert.

NHTSA **warning signs of drowsy driving:**

- Inability to recall the last few miles traveled
- Having disconnected or wandering thoughts
- Having difficulty focusing or keeping your eyes open
- Feeling as though your head is very heavy
- Drifting from the lane in which you are driving
- Yawning repeatedly
- Tailgating other vehicles
- Missing traffic signs

When in doubt that you may be too sleepy to drive, then don't take a chance. The NHTSA offers the following advice if you become too tired while driving:

- Find a safe place to stop the car.
- Take a short nap (20 minutes).
- Drink coffee for short-term alertness until you can find a safe place to rest.

This holiday season, get plenty of sleep, drive carefully, and happy trails! 

Prison Sentence for Drowsy Drivers

In a move to protect families from drowsy drivers, on August 5, 2003 New Jersey Governor James E. McGreevey, signed Senate Bill S-1644, which is known as "Maggie's Law".

The new law permits prosecutors to lodge vehicular homicide charges against anyone responsible for a



fatal crash following a period of 30 hours or more without sleep. The second-degree crime is punishable by up to 10 years in prison with fines as much as \$150,000 for sleep deprived drivers who cause

a fatal accident.

Maggie McDonnell was just 20 years old when she was hit head on by a driver who had fallen asleep at the wheel after being awake for more than 30 hours.

(Source: Association of Polysomnographic Technology website
http://www.aptweb.org/news_industry/new39.asp)



SNOOZE NEWS! s provided to you by
Sleep Services of America, Inc.

For more information on scheduling a sleep study, please
call 800-755-7510.

Please Note: This information is not intended to provide an alternative to professional treatment or to replace the services of a physician. For more information on sleep disorders, go to www.sleepservices.net . For questions about Snooze News, contact our Editor, @ 1-800-340-9978, ext. 251. This publication cannot be duplicated without permission.

Counting sheep a bit too often? Here's the lowdown on Insomnia.

In today's world, a lot of us may think that our frantic, stressful, and not to mention increasingly long work days keep us from getting enough needed shut eye at night. But if you find yourself suffering from too many sleepless nights, despite the number of sheep you've tallied, then you're not alone—insomnia plagues 48 percent of all American adults.



Types of Insomnia

Sleepless nights can happen to anyone. But at what point should your insomnia really concern you? There are three basic types of insomnia – transient, short term, and chronic. **Transient insomnia** is the inability to sleep well for several nights. **Short-term Insomnia** is the inability to sleep well for two or three weeks. If you find your sleepless nights linger on to every or most nights, then you may have **chronic insomnia**. More than 40 million Americans complain of chronic insomnia. And while many people attribute chronic insomnia to stress, more than half of all cases are actually due to other physical ailments, such as breathing disorders, periodic limb movements, restless leg syndrome, medication effects, or circadian rhythm disturbances.

Cause and Treatment

If your sleep has been disturbed for more than a month and it is interfering with your daytime functioning, you should seek help from your doctor. Insomnia is a symptom; it is not a diagnosis. The causes of insomnia vary greatly. The most common include the following:

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Loud snoring/Hypertension | Lung Disease |
| Obstructive sleep apnea | Caffeine |
| Restless leg syndrome | Depression |
| Periodic leg movements | Nicotine |
| Stress/Anxiety | Prescription & non-prescription drugs |
| Alcohol | Pain |
| Heart Disease | Misuse or overuse of sleeping pills |
| Diabetes | |

Proper evaluation and treatment should include a review of your sleep patterns and any medications you take, as well as a review of your medical history and a physical exam. In some cases, your doctor may recommend you undergo a sleep study in a professional sleep lab. **sn**

Can't Sleep? Try these proven techniques for more restful nights.

Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at a similar time each morning. If bed times vary significantly on work-nights versus nights off, then the body's rhythms are disrupted, much like jet lag. People need an average of eight hours of sleep per night.

Go to bed only when you are sleepy. If you cannot fall asleep, or awaken for more than 15 to 20 minutes during the night, get up and do something relaxing in another room.

The bedroom should be dark, quiet and cool. Draperies, including black-out curtains will help darken the room. Drapes and carpets also serve as sound absorbers. Never try to fall asleep with the lights or television on. Cool rooms are better for sleeping than warm rooms.

Avoid large meals at late night. A light snack before bedtime may help you sleep, but avoid heavy meals late in the evening.

Avoid alcohol in the late evening. Alcohol consumption aggravates snoring, obstructive sleep apnea, and causes disturbed sleep during the latter part of the night. No one feels refreshed after drinking too much the night before.

Avoid using sleeping pills for more than one or two nights per month. Avoid them totally if you have obstructive sleep apnea.

Eliminate all caffeine after lunch time. It may not keep you from falling asleep, but it keeps you from obtaining deep sleep and staying asleep.

Do not nap for more than 30 minutes during the day. Longer naps disrupt the body's ability to stay asleep at night.

Avoid vigorous exercise after 7 p.m. Regular exercise helps promote deep sleep, but avoid heavy exercise in the evenings, or it may make it harder to fall asleep.

For more information on sleep disorders, including insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), visit www.sleepservices.net.