

## Ways to Get Enough Sleep

Getting enough sleep is the only way to prevent drowsy driving. It will make you feel better and reduce your risk of drowsy driving. These tips may help you get the sleep you need.

- Keep your bedroom dark and go to sleep at the same time every day.
- Close the bedroom door and hang a “Do Not Disturb” sign on it.
- Unplug or turn off the telephone in your bedroom.
- Develop a relaxing sleep ritual. Before going to sleep listen to relaxing music, read or take a warm bath or shower.
- Block outside sounds by using a fan or wearing earplugs.
- Lower the thermostat to 60-65°F before going to bed.
- Avoid caffeine several hours before going to bed. Caffeine’s effects can linger for a long time.
- Avoid alcohol before going to bed. It may help you fall asleep, but make it harder to stay asleep, keeping your body from getting the rest it needs.
- Clear your mind. Make a list of things you are concerned about or need to do the next day so you don’t worry about them when you’re trying to go to sleep.
- Know about the possible side effects of your medications. Some over-the-counter and prescription medicines can increase sleepiness and make it dangerous to drive.

By following these tips, you should feel more alert and rested. Be patient with yourself. Your sleep patterns may not get better right away. It may take a week or two to notice improvements.

For more information about drowsy driving and getting better sleep, go to:

- New York State Department of Health  
[health.ny.gov](http://health.ny.gov)
- National Sleep Foundation  
[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)
- New York State Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee  
[SafeNY.ny.gov](http://SafeNY.ny.gov)
- National Center on Sleep Disorders Research  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsr/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/ncsr/index.htm)
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety  
[www.aaafoundation.org](http://www.aaafoundation.org)
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
[www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov)

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State of New York  
Department of Health



**Work at Night?  
Not Getting  
Enough Sleep?**



**Know  
the Facts  
About  
Driving  
Drowsy**



*Do you work the night shift? If so, your late night and early morning drive home from work may be the most dangerous part of your day.*

## What is Drowsy Driving?

Drowsy driving is falling asleep when driving or not paying attention when driving due to fatigue. It can happen from not getting enough sleep or from being fatigued.

Shift workers are at high risk for drowsy driving because they usually get less sleep and stay awake longer than non-shift workers. Also, the human body is governed by an internal clock which makes you want to sleep when it's dark and be awake when it's light. This can cause periods of sleepiness between midnight and 6 a.m. and in the mid-afternoon, making it harder to sleep during the day.

## Driving Drowsy Can Be As Dangerous As Driving Drunk

If you're tired, you can fall asleep and not realize it. You also can't tell how long you've been asleep. Falling asleep, even for a few seconds, can cause a crash that can seriously injure or kill you or someone else.

## Know the Warning Signs of Sleepiness

- Can't stop yawning.
- Eyelids droop or blink frequently.
- Trouble keeping your eyes open and focused, especially at stoplights.
- Mind wandering or having disconnected thoughts.
- Can't remember driving the last few miles.
- Driving becomes sloppy: weaving between lanes, tailgating or missing traffic signs or signals.
- Driving on the grooves or rumble strips on the side of the road.

If you experience any of these warning signs when driving, pull over and take a 20-minute nap or switch driving with another licensed driver.

## Sleeping Disorders

Talk to your doctor if you continue to have problems falling asleep, staying asleep or waking up too early. You may have a sleeping disorder. You should also ask your pharmacist about the side effects of any medications you are taking.

## Feeling Drowsy? Steps to Get Home Safely

Avoid driving home from work if you feel drowsy. Consider the following:

- Carpool so there is someone else awake in the vehicle.
- Get a ride home from an alert co-worker.
- Call a family member or friend to pick you up.
- Take a taxi or public transportation.
- Take a short nap (15 to 20 minutes) before driving.

Some experts recommend drinking two cups of coffee and then taking a short nap. You'll get some sleep before the caffeine takes effect, and when it does, you'll wake up and be alert for your drive home. However, caffeine may not have the same effect on people who use it regularly. Turning up the volume on the radio, singing loudly, chewing gum, eating, or opening the windows will not keep you awake when driving.

