

Driver Fatigue and Road Trance

Toolbox Talk

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that the principal causes of about 100,000 police-reported road crashes each year are driver drowsiness and fatigue.

Drowsiness is as dangerous to driving as falling asleep at the wheel. Most drivers have experienced fatigue and the trance-like state caused by staring too long at the white lines in the center of the road. Road trance can result in slow perceptions and reaction times, and can leave drivers unable to remember how they reached their destination.



Symptoms of Driver Fatigue and Road Trance

- Burning sensation in the eyes
- Eyelids feel heavy
- Inability to focus eyes
- Muscles begin to twitch
- Back tension
- Yawning
- Thoughts wander and are disconnected
- Limbs feel heavy, or light and tingly, or numb
- Breathing becomes shallow

There are some very basic causes of fatigue. Lack of sleep, or poor-quality sleep, is often compounded by poor diet, being overweight, lack of exercise, and consuming alcohol. In our daily lives, it is sometimes difficult to eat a balanced diet, get adequate exercise, or even have a restful sleep. A long road trip, or driving for a living, can create even greater obstacles to our wellbeing. Therefore, we need to take an active part in prevention when it comes to driving in a tired or distracted state.

Steps for Prevention of Driver Fatigue and Road Trance

- Get regular exercise
- Plan a healthy, well-balanced diet
- Aim for seven or eight hours of sleep
- Start out as early in the day as possible
- Eat a light meal before driving, not a heavy one
- Avoid driving alone whenever possible
- Keep trips to reasonable distances
- Try to avoid long night drives
- Keep the driver's area cool and well ventilated
- Avoid soft music and change radio stations often
- Talk to passengers, being careful not to be distracted
- Watch for road and traffic signs
- Drive with an erect posture, with legs at a 45-degree angle
- Take breaks every two hours or 100 miles
- On break, get out of the vehicle and walk, jog, or stretch
- Avoid driving during hours when you would normally be sleeping
- Stop to eat snacks or light meals
- Avoid alcohol and any medications that might cause drowsiness
- Sing, chew gum, stretch, vary driving speeds, and listen to the radio to stay alert
- Wear sunglasses only during daylight hours
- If it is essential, pull over and take a nap of no more than 20 minutes – any longer will make you feel groggy

These suggestions can help to avoid accidents that often result from driver fatigue and road trance.

