

Tiredness can kill – Advice for drivers

For more information go to www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth





What if I have a condition causing sleepiness/tiredness during the day?

- You need to tell us if you hold a current driving licence of any type.
- You can tell us by email or download a form from the “medical rules for drivers” section of **www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth**
- You can also tell us by post, fax, or phone.
- A third party notification will only be accepted in writing and must be signed by the letter writer.
- Please include your full name, address and date of birth.

We will then send you a questionnaire so you can give us details about your medical condition. The questionnaire also enables you to provide your consent for our Medical Advisers to request medical information from your doctors.

It may take some time to complete our enquiries, in the meantime we advise you to speak to your doctor or specialist about driving while we are completing our enquiries. A decision will be made about your driving licence as quickly as possible.

Facts you should know about Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)

- OSA is the most common sleep related medical disorder.
- OSA significantly increases the risk of traffic accidents.
- OSA occurs most commonly, but not exclusively, in overweight individuals.
- Partners often complain about snoring and notice that the sufferers have breathing pauses during sleep.
- OSA sufferers rarely wake from sleep feeling fully refreshed and tend to fall asleep easily when relaxing.
- Long distance lorry and bus drivers affected by OSA are of great concern as most will be driving on monotonous roads/motorways and the size or nature of the vehicle gives little room for error.
- Estimates suggest at least four in every hundred men have OSA. Sleep problems arise more commonly in older people.
- Lifestyle changes for example weight loss or cutting back on alcohol, will help ease the symptoms of OSA.
- The most widely effective treatment for OSA is Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). This requires the patient to wear a soft face mask during sleep to regulate breathing. This treatment enables patients to have a good night's sleep, so reducing daytime sleepiness and improving concentration.



Other conditions which may cause sleepiness/tiredness

Although all drivers are subject to the pressures of modern life, many drivers are unaware that some medical conditions also cause excessive sleepiness/tiredness.

- Illnesses of the nervous system, such as Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and Narcolepsy may also cause excessive sleepiness/tiredness. Sometimes these illnesses alone may cause drivers to be unfit for driving.
- Tiredness or excessive sleepiness can be a non-specific symptom of Parkinson's disease, MS, and MND or may also be related to prescribed medication.
- Narcolepsy also causes daytime sleepiness/tiredness as well as other symptoms that may be disabling for drivers.



Facts you should know about excessive sleepiness/tiredness and driving

- There is no excuse for falling asleep at the wheel and it is not an excuse in law.
- Up to one fifth of accidents on motorways and other monotonous types of roads may be caused by drivers falling asleep at the wheel.
- 18 – 30 year old males are more likely to fall asleep at the wheel when driving late at night.
- Modern lifestyles such as early morning starts, shift work, late night socialising, often lead to excessive tiredness by preventing adequate rest.
- All drivers who fall asleep at the wheel have a degree of warning.
- Natural sleepiness/tiredness occurs after eating a large meal.
- Changes in body rhythm produce a natural increased tendency to sleep at two parts of the day:-
 - Midnight – 6am
 - 2pm – 4pm
- Although no one should drink and drive at any time, alcohol consumed in the afternoon may be twice as potent in terms of producing sleepiness and driving impairment as the same amount taken in the evening.
- Prescribed or over-the-counter medication can cause sleepiness as a side effect. Always check the label, if you intend to drive.

Find out about DVLA's online services

Go to: www.direct.gov.uk/onlinemotoringservices



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