



Driver & Vehicle
Licensing
Agency

INF159

Tiredness can kill



**Sleepiness and
tiredness**



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What if I have a condition causing sleepiness/tiredness?

- You need to tell us if you hold a current driving licence of any type.
- You can tell us online or download a form from www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving
- 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 DVLA doctors to request medical information from your doctors.

It may take some time to complete our enquiries. We advise you 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.



Sleep apnoea, tiredness and driving

- Sleep apnoea is often accompanied by tiredness.
- Sleep apnoea is the most common sleep related medical disorder.
- Sleep apnoea significantly increases the risk of traffic accidents.
- Sleep apnoea occurs most commonly, but not exclusively, in overweight individuals.
- Partners often complain about snoring and notice that the sufferers have breathing pauses during sleep.
- Sleep apnoea sufferers rarely wake from sleep feeling fully refreshed and tend to fall asleep easily when relaxing.
- Long distance lorry and bus drivers affected by sleep apnoea 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 100 men have sleep apnoea. Sleep problems arise more commonly in older people.
- Lifestyle changes such as weight loss or cutting back on alcohol, will help ease the symptoms of sleep apnoea.
- The most widely effective treatment for sleep apnoea 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 sleepiness during normal waking hours 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. It may also be related to prescribed medication.
- Narcolepsy also causes sleepiness/tiredness during waking hours 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 to 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 and 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 to 6am
 - 2pm to 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.

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