



# Fatigue

## Don't ignore it, deal with it

### The Facts

- An estimated 300 people die every year as a result of a driver falling asleep at the wheel [1]
- It is believed that fatigue is the prime cause of 20% of crashes on motorways and other trunk roads [2]
- Our sleep patterns are governed by an in-built biological clock known as the circadian rhythm, which you are powerless to influence
- Acknowledge your circadian rhythm pattern and avoid driving between midnight and 6 a.m., when your body is naturally demanding sleep
- The disorder **sleep apnoea** is believed to affect some 80,000 drivers in the UK and is potentially lethal [2]
- Sufferers believe they are sleeping well but it's sleep quality not quantity that's important
- If you snore, particularly if the snoring is interrupted by pauses in breath, are overweight, lack energy, have high blood pressure, are irritable, are forgetful and have difficulty concentrating, you may be suffering from sleep apnoea[1]

### The Advice

- Based on the above, if you think you may suffer from sleep apnoea **SEE A DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY**
- Seek professional advice about the possible fatigue-inducing properties of both prescription and over-the-counter medicines. If in doubt, don't drive
- Be very aware of the secondary circadian rhythm period when fatigue can strike – between 2 and 4 p.m
- Maintain good hydration whilst driving. It helps stave off fatigue.
- Always plan to stop for at least a 15 minute break every two hours of driving
- If you still feel tired, don't fight it. Winding the window down and turning up the music **WILL NOT WORK**
- As soon as you feel the first symptoms of tiredness find a safe place to stop, have two cups of coffee or other high caffeine drink, get out of the vehicle and walk around, all the time taking deep breaths. Allow 20 minutes or so for the caffeine to take effect before resuming your journey
- If you are still suffering from fatigue symptoms thereafter, you have no other option but to stop for a sleep. Although an overnight stay in a hotel is obviously the best solution this may not be practical
- Research has proved that sleeping even for 30 minutes can have a beneficial effect, so set your alarm and have as much sleep as you can to allow you to complete your journey within the timeframe but without exceeding speed limits

Sources [1] DfT Road Research Report #51 [2] DVLA Report 2013