



Information for Patients

SLEEP AND DRIVING



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Overview

Driving, in a private motor car or as occupational driving of a truck or van, is a potentially dangerous activity which requires constant attention and concentration. Many sleep disorders cause excessive daytime sleepiness, which significantly increases the risk of motor vehicle accidents. **Approximately 10% of motor vehicle accidents are attributable to driver fatigue, tiredness or falling asleep at the wheel.**

If you suspect that you have a sleep disorder or you feel that you are tired or drowsy when driving, it is very important to discuss the issue with your medical practitioner, who may wish to refer you for an overnight sleep study or to a Sleep Specialist. Correct treatment can then be implemented, reducing associated driving risks.

What to do if you are currently treated for a sleep disorder

If you are currently treated for a sleep disorder (such as CPAP treatment for sleep apnoea), it is essential to keep your treatment up-to-date and to have regular check-ups with your Sleep Physician to ensure that it is safe for you to continue driving.

Regardless of whether or not you have been diagnosed with a sleep-disorder, you should never drive if you are feeling drowsy, tired or sleepy. **You must check with your local driving authority as to what regulations are in place in your area with regard to sleepiness and driving.**

Some tips for safe driving (with respect of fatigue and sleepiness)

- Never drive if you are feeling drowsy, tired, sleepy or fatigued
- Avoid driving if you have been awake for longer than 16 hours, or are otherwise sleep-deprived
- If you suspect that you will be too tired to drive, organise to take public transport to and from your destination, or car-pool with others
- Where possible, drive with other people (especially long distances or when driving at night) – two pairs of eyes on the road are better than one
- When driving long distances, stop for a 5 to 10 minute break at least every 2 hours
- Have a 15-minute 'power nap' if you are feeling sleepy while driving long distances
- Avoid using the heater when driving, as many people find warm environments conducive of sleep
- Do not hesitate to discuss sleep-matters with your doctors.

Further information on sleep-disorders and driving is available on the SNORE Australia Website, the AustRoads website (www.austroads.gov.au) and the appropriate state traffic authority in your state or territory.