



What Does Drowsy Driving Look Like?

Even though drowsy driving can be difficult to measure, there are some **clear warning signs** that show a driver is not alert enough to be on the road. Here are some red flags to look out for if you or someone you know is behind the wheel:

- Drifting out of the lane
- Frequent blinking, yawning, or rubbing of the eyes
- A vague memory of the last few miles you've driven
- Missing your exit
- Irritability and restlessness
- Daydreaming and disconnected thoughts
- Hitting the rumble strip on the side of the road

It's also important to identify situations where a driver (whether it's you or a friend) **has the potential to become a drowsy driver** before anyone even turns on the ignition. Here are some classic situations in which drowsy driving is likely to occur:

- **In the evening after a long day (or after a night of sleep deprivation).** Most drowsy driving accidents occur at night when the body naturally wants to fall asleep. If someone is fatigued from a long day at work or has simply not gotten enough sleep on a comfortable mattress the night before, that person has a higher chance of dozing off during the drive.
- **During long road trips.** Drowsy driving may be most common at night, but it can happen at any time of day — especially during long road trips. Driving down the same empty road for hours on end can get monotonous after a while. If there are no other cars, pedestrians, or changing landscapes to look at, the mind does not have to work as hard to assess its surroundings. Soon your mind starts to wander, and your alertness begins to drop. Additionally, sitting for long periods causes your blood flow to slow down. That will encourage the body go into energy conservation mode and can bring on sleepiness.
- **After consuming alcohol.** Drivers also need to be aware of what they are putting into their bodies before they get in the car. Alcohol — even when consumed in small amounts — can be dangerous. You might not feel drunk after one beer at the bar, but alcohol coaxes the body to feel

more relaxed or sedated. If you're already a bit tired, having a drink can increase the urge to fall asleep.

- **After taking certain medications.** People who take certain medications have to be careful as well. Some drugs induce drowsiness and will put drivers at risk. For example, certain cold and allergy medications (such as NyQuil or Benadryl) can make you sleepy. Also be aware of certain painkillers, such as codeine or morphine, or anxiety meds such as Xanax or Valium.

If you ever find yourself in any of these situations before you step behind the wheel, it's probably best that you **let someone else take over for you** or find some other way to avoid driving. That way, you and any fellow passengers can stay out of danger and keep the streets as safe as possible.