

The Lexington Group Employee Assistance Program

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Information and tips to help you live healthier and happier

Drowsy Drivers Causing Major Public Safety Problem

According to the National Sleep Foundation (NSF), lack of sleep is creating a major public safety problem in the U.S. – drowsy driving. The NSF's 2009 *Sleep in America* poll reports that more than one-half of adults (54%) – potentially 110 million licensed drivers – have driven when drowsy at least once in the past year. Nearly one-third of drivers polled (28%) say they have nodded off or fallen asleep while driving a vehicle. The result: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) conservatively estimates that there are 100,000 car accidents each year caused by driver drowsiness, and these crashes result in 71,000 injuries and 1,500 deaths.

A study of drivers in North Carolina found that among those who got into auto accidents, half had slept less than six hours before the crash. Researchers at Stanford University recently concluded that sleep-deprived drivers are just as dangerous as drunk drivers. When sleep deprived, the brain is essentially too tired to process the information it is receiving effectively, resulting in slower information processing and reaction time at the wheel. A 2008 German study found that sleep-deprived subjects had reaction times and general performance abilities comparable to subjects with blood alcohol levels equivalent of 0.05.



Make adequate sleep a priority

The most up-to-date research reveals that most adults require between 7-9 hours of sleep per night to function at their best. Yet, according to the *Sleep in America* poll, one in five Americans gets less than six hours of sleep per night. To avoid drowsy driving and to function at your best, the NSF recommends the following tips to get a better night's sleep:

1. Make regular, adequate sleep a priority.
2. Try to have a standard relaxing bedtime routine and keep regular sleep times.
3. Exercise regularly, but finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.
4. Avoid foods and drinks high in caffeine (coffee, colas and tea) for at least eight hours prior to bedtime and avoid alcohol for a few hours before bedtime. Caffeine and alcohol disturb sleep.
5. Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex; if you do this, you will strengthen the association between bed and sleep. It is best to remove work materials, computers and televisions sets from the sleep environment.

NOTE: If you suffer from chronic or severe insomnia, visit your doctor or a sleep disorders clinic to see if there is an underlying medical condition.

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Caring and individualized help for personal and family concerns is only a phone call away.
For confidential services 24 hours every day, call us toll free at:

United States	1-800-676-HELP (4357)
Canada	1-800-567-4343
England	0-800-169-6706
Mexico	001-888-819-7162
Marshall Islands	1-800-676-4357
Puerto Rico	1-800-676-4357
TTY	1-800-955-8339