Driving When Tired?
Am I safe to drive?

Why
Are we doing this talk?

The fact that drunk, drugged and distracted drivers pose a danger to themselves and others is fairly well understood, but tired drivers, though often ignored as a risk, are every bit as dangerous.

The traditional image is of someone driving late at night, possibly on the way to or from a holiday, but these days, tiredness is often an issue with people driving for work too – often because of hours driven rather than the time of day.

If you spend the week working away from home or have just flown back into the country, you might also be susceptible to sleep related accidents.

Research carried out for the AA Charitable Trust’s #drowsy driver campaign, launched in November 2018, showed:

- One in eight (13%) UK drivers admit to falling asleep at the wheel
- Nearly two fifths (37%) say they have been so tired they have been scared they would fall asleep when driving
- Men (17%) are three times as likely as women (5%) to say they have fallen asleep at the wheel

How
Can it affect us?

The top five reasons for driving tired are**:

1. A long/hard day at work (39%)
2. Monotony of the journey (33%)
3. Late night driving (27%)
4. Trying to cover too much distance in one day (27%)
5. Lack of sleep the night before (26%)

If you don’t get enough sleep it will affect your ability to function in several different ways any of which can have dangerous consequences when you’re driving.

Driving tired impairs judgement and reaction time so you may react slowly, brake late or miss a hazard altogether. This may explain why driving tired is a factor in a lot of rear end crashes.

Driving tired also affects your coordination so you might find yourself varying your speed - slowing down and speeding up - or your lane position, rather smoothly following a straight line.

Crashes involving tired drivers are often at high speed and without any braking because the driver was asleep.
What do we need to do?

Winding down the window or turning the radio up aren’t effective at combatting tiredness. If you find yourself doing these things, it’s a sign you are sleepy and need a break.

- At the first sign of tiredness, stop and take a break
- Stop in a safe place – don’t stop on a motorway hard shoulder
- Drink two cups of coffee or an equivalent caffeinated drink
- Take a short nap of around 15-20 minutes

Even experienced HGV drivers are prevented from driving more than 9 hours in a day or working for over 13 hours in a day. Most car drivers are nowhere near as used to driving for this long.

- Don’t drive for more than 8 hours in a day
- Take regular fifteen minute breaks in journeys over three hours
- Aim to stop every two hours or so, especially if you’re not used to driving long distances
- Plan journeys so that you can take breaks, allowing for an overnight stay if necessary
- Don’t start a long journey if you’re tired

Sleep is what the body needs at this point because we have either been awake for a long time or our internal body clock is saying it is time for sleep. Sometimes these will both occur at the same time.

- Loud music or cold air may raise our alertness for a very brief moment but does not address the fundamental need to sleep
- The risk of driver fatigue is highest between 2am and 6am, and again in the afternoon between 2pm and 4pm. At these times, the internal body clock promotes sleepiness.

Q&A

What did we understand?

What is the top reason people site for driving tired?

Name two things we should do when feeling tired on the road?

What times of the day are we most vulnerable on to driver fatigue?