Drowsy Driving Dangers

Developed By: Allison Goshorn, LaPorte County

DESCRIPTION:
Did you know that drowsy driving can be just as dangerous as drinking and driving? According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 41% of drivers admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel. The National Sleep Foundations warns that the lack of sleep can have serious consequences for those at home, work, school or on the roadways. This lesson provides tips for protecting you and your loved ones – learn how to avoid the dangers of drowsy driving.

OPTIONS:
1. 15 Minute Program - Share several of the statistics and ask several questions listed on the presenter’s guide. Ask members for their ideas for preventing drowsy driving dangers. Distribute the HANDOUT to the members and ask for their commitment in supporting one another in sleep and driving safety.

2. 30 Minute Program - Introduce the topic by asking members if they have ever felt drowsy or fell asleep, even for a fraction of a second, behind the wheel? Read the program description then distribute the Self-Quiz or go online at http://www.aaafoundation.org/quizzes/indes.cfm?button+drowsyquiz Allow several minutes for them to complete the quiz. Next, share the answers to the quiz questions. Ask members for their ideas for preventing drowsy driving dangers. Distribute the HANDOUT to the members and ask for their commitment in supporting one another in sleep and driving safety.

3. 45 Minute Program - Introduce the topic by asking members if they have ever felt drowsy or fell asleep, even for a fraction of a second, behind the wheel? Read the program description then distribute the Self-Quiz or go online at https://www.aaafoundation.org/node/25/take
Allow several minutes for them to complete the quiz. Next, share the answers to the quiz questions. Ask members for their ideas for preventing drowsy driving dangers. Distribute the HANDOUT to the members and ask for their commitment in supporting one another in sleep and driving safety. Ask members to think about someone that they know who might be at risk for drowsy driving; complete the Action Steps for Safety Form.

Materials Needed:
You will need only one copy of the leader’s guide and enough of all other materials for each member.

- Leader’s Guide
- Discussion Questions
- Self-Quiz
- Handout – Facts About Drowsy Driving by the National Sleep Foundation
- Action Steps for Preventing Drowsy Driving Accidents

References:
AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety at https://www.aaafoundation.org/
National Sleep Foundation at http://www.sleepfoundation.org/

For More Information Contact:
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LEADER’S GUIDE:

- **Description:** Did you know that drowsy driving can be just as dangerous as drinking and driving? According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, 41% of drivers admit to having fallen asleep at the wheel. The National Sleep Foundations warns that the lack of sleep can have serious consequences for those at home, work, school or on the roadways. This lesson provides tips for protecting you and your loved ones – learn how to avoid the dangers of drowsy driving.

- **Goal:**
  1. Members will have an increased understanding of drowsy driving dangers. Topics include: a) who is at-risk, b) factors that contribute to the risks, and c) how to prevent or minimize the danger.

- **Statistics:**
  1. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that at least 100,000 police-reported crashes each year are the direct result of driver fatigue.
  2. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death of young peoples in the U.S. taking the lives of at least 5,600 teens each year (NHTSA)
  3. According to the National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF), 50% of drivers don’t know that they have fallen asleep. One night without sleep equals a blood alcohol content of .10.
  4. Everyone drowsiness (NRSF), including pedestrians and cyclists, underestimates the risk probability of

- **Self-Quiz Answers According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety at [https://www.aaafoundation.org/node/25/take](https://www.aaafoundation.org/node/25/take)**
  1. False – the only safe driver is an alert driver.
  2. False – 50% or more Americans report sleep problems.
  3. False – sleep is not like money, you cannot save it up ahead of time.
  4. False – teenagers & young adults need more sleep than those in their 30s.
  5. True – everyone has a biological clock but it is different from person to person.
  6. True – more than one in ten people have trouble sleeping
  7. False – coffee can be a temporary remedy but is no substitute for sleep
  8. False – even people who say they cannot nap will fall asleep in a darkened room if they are tired.
  9. True – a drowsy driver does not process information as fast or accurately as an alert driver.
  10. False – sleep is not voluntary, if you are drowsy or sleep-deprived you can fall asleep and never know it.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

How important is sleep?
Answer: Sleep is vital to wellbeing.

What happens when we don’t get enough sleep?
Answer: Sleep affects every part of life including health, safety, mood, learning, appearance, relationships and productivity.

How many people have a sleep problem?
Answer: Studies suggest that approximately 60% of adults and teens have a sleep problem at least once a week.

What are the warning signs of drowsiness or fatigue?
Answer: Slowed reaction time; impaired vision and/or judgment; decline in attention to important signs, road conditions, and actions of other vehicles; decreased alertness such as drifting in the lane, yawning, daydreaming; turning up the radio or opening the window; increased moodiness and aggressive behavior; difficulties with information processing and short term memory and MICROSLEEPS – brief, fraction-of-a-second sleep episodes.

What is drowsy driving?
Answer: Drowsy driving is a prevalent national public health and safety problem. Researchers have identified the principal causes, at-risk groups, and prevention strategies. Safe driving requires a set of skills including eye-hand coordination, reaction time, vision, an awareness of the surroundings, decision-making, judgment and inhibition.

Who is at-risk for drowsy driving?
Answer: People who Get too little sleep or poor quality sleep; Take sedating medications such as cold tablets, antihistamines or antidepressants; Travel alone or along a long, dark, rural or boring roadway; consume even a small amount of alcohol; drive late at night or mid-afternoon; work night or swing shifts; work more than 60 hours a week or drive a long distance without a break.
SELF-QUIZ

This quiz is based on the on-line version developed by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and is available on-line at https://www.aaafoundation.org/node/25/take

Please take a few minutes to answer each of questions below. Your leader has the answers and will conduct a discussion.

Circle the correct answer:

1. Everyone has a biological clock.
   a. True  b. False

2. Drinking coffee can eliminate drowsiness while driving.
   a. True  b. False

3. I can tell when I am about to fall asleep.
   a. True  b. False

4. It doesn’t matter if I am sleepy because I am a safe driver.
   a. True  b. False

5. I can’t take naps.
   a. True  b. False

6. Nearly everybody gets enough sleep.
   a. True  b. False

   a. True  b. False

8. Young people don’t need as much sleep as older ones.
   a. True  b. False

9. I won’t need to sleep as much later if I sleep a lot now.
   a. True  b. False

10. Even those who sleep 8 hours may not be well rested.
   a. True  b. False

NOTES:
ACTION STEPS: for Preventing Drowsy Driving Accidents

1. Get enough sleep. Adults need 7-9 hours and teens need 8.5 – 9.5 hours.

2. Take driving breaks about every 100 miles or every two hours.
3. Travel with an alert companion. Don’t trade off driving and sleeping. Plan shorter trips or naps if necessary.

4. If possible avoid sedating medications when traveling.
5. Avoid alcohol when traveling.
6. Know and watch for the warning signs of fatigue in self and others.
7. Stop driving when fatigued – find a place to rest or sleep for the night.
8. Take a nap in a safe place for 15 – 20 minutes.
9. Consume caffeine and take a short nap. It takes about two cups of coffee to increase alertness and about 30 minutes for it to take effect. So a short nap after two cups of coffee may be a good idea!
10. Avoid high-risk travel times such as late night, mid-afternoon, dark rainy days and about 12 hours after awaking (which is usually a low energy point for most people).

Action Steps for Safety Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Risk Group</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Action Steps for Safety</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dan &amp; Doris Drowsy</td>
<td>Truck Drivers</td>
<td>Drive 60+ hours per week</td>
<td>Take more frequent breaks with nap &amp; coffee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Driving while Drowsy - What’s the Harm?
Most people are aware of the dangers of driving while intoxicated, but many do not know that drowsiness also impairs judgment, performance and reaction times just like alcohol and drugs. Studies show that being awake for more than 20 hours results in an impairment equal to a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08, the legal limit in all states.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conservatively estimates that 100,000 police-reported crashes each year are caused primarily by drowsy driving and that such crashes result in more than 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and $12.5 billion in monetary losses. According to National Sleep Foundation surveys, half of American adults consistently report that they have driven drowsy and approximately 20% admit that they have actually fallen asleep at the wheel in the previous year. This brochure outlines the important facts about sleepiness behind the wheel and offers tips to help you drive alert and arrive alive.

Watch Out for Signs of Sleepiness
Most people are not very good at predicting when they are about to fall asleep. But there are key warning signs to tell you when you are too tired to drive, including:

- Trouble focusing, keeping your eyes open or your head up
- Yawning or rubbing your eyes repeatedly
- Daydreaming and wandering thoughts
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating and missing signs or exits
- Feeling restless, irritable or aggressive
- Turning up the radio or rolling down the window
- Slower reaction time, poor judgment

These are signs that you may be at risk of falling asleep behind the wheel. If you experience any of these, pull over immediately at a safe place, switch drivers, take a short nap, consume caffeine or find a place to sleep for the night.

Drowsy Driving – Who’s Most at Risk?
Anyone who drives is at risk of falling asleep at the wheel, but some groups of people are more at risk than others. They include:

- **Young drivers** – Combining inexperience with sleepiness and a tendency to drive at night puts young people at risk, especially males aged 16-25 years.

- **Shift workers and people working long hours** – People who work night shifts, rotating shifts, double shifts or work more than one job have a six-fold increase in drowsy driving crashes.

- **Commercial drivers** – Those who drive a high number of miles and drive at night are at significantly higher risk for fall-asleep crashes. Commercial drivers have also been found to be at a high risk for sleep disorders.

- **People with untreated sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)** – People with untreated OSA are up to seven times more likely to have a drowsy driving crash. For some people insomnia can increase fatigue.

- **Business travelers** – Frequent travelers who may be suffering from jet lag and crossing time zones, spending long hours behind the wheel or getting too little sleep.
Preventing a Fall-Asleep Crash

The best way to avoid a drowsy driving crash is to get adequate sleep on a regular basis, practice good sleep habits, and to seek treatment for sleep problems, should they arise. In addition, here are some important driving dos and don’ts:

DON’T

• Drive if you are tired or on medication that may cause drowsiness. (Check medication labels and speak to your doctor)

• Rely on the radio, an open window or other tricks to keep you awake.

• Drive at times when you would normally be sleeping.

• Drink even a small amount of alcohol, especially if you are sleepy.

DO

• Get a good night’s sleep before a long drive.

• Get off the road if you notice any of the warning signs of fatigue.

• Take a nap – find a safe place to take a 15 to 20-minute nap.

• Consume caffeine – the equivalent of 2 cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours, but DO NOT rely on it for long periods.

• Try consuming caffeine before taking a short nap to get the benefits of both.

• Drive with a friend. A passenger who remains awake can help watch for signs of fatigue in the driver and can take a turn driving, if necessary.

• Always wear your seatbelt.

When we drive, we take responsibility for our own safety and the safety of others on the road with us. No trip is worth a life. Before you hit the road, keep these tips in mind so that you can drive alert and arrive alive.

Get Involved!

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) sponsors Drowsy Driving Prevention Week™, an annual, national campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of driving while tired. You can help support our efforts by:

• Becoming a member of NSF. NSF offers memberships for individuals, organizations, or sleep centers. Find out more online at www.sleepfoundation.org/joinus.

• Becoming a Drowsy Driving Advocate. Join our national network of advocates dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of sleep and the prevention of drowsy driving. Visit us online at www.DrowsyDriving.org to learn more.

• Conducting your own drowsy driving initiative. NSF offers a free online drowsy driving toolkit filled with information and resources to help you design your own awareness programs. NSF also hosts an online drowsy driving memorial page to pay tribute to loved ones who have been lost in sleep-related crashes. Visit www.DrowsyDriving.org to learn more.

NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION
Waking America to the Importance of Sleep®

www.sleepfoundation.org

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