



## The facts about driver fatigue

Driver fatigue is a term we hear frequently but many of us don't understand what it is or how it affects us. Fatigue is a term commonly used to describe being tired, sleepy or exhausted.

Fatigue doesn't only affect us when we travel long distances – you could suffer from fatigue on your drive home from work, or even first thing in the morning.

### Tired? Don't ignore the warning signs

Fatigue severely impairs judgement and affects everyone. While symptoms vary, they can include:

- poor concentration
- yawning
- delayed reactions
- memory lapses
- micro-sleeps
- tired or sore eyes
- drowsiness
- boredom or daydreaming
- difficulty staying focused

### Avoid fatigue

South Australia is a large state with long distances between major towns and cities. Becoming familiar with the route we travel or being experienced at driving long distances will not stop the effects of fatigue.

No matter how well you plan, the most critical part of the trip – depending where and when to stop – is usually left to the 'empty' gauge on the fuel tank or when someone gets hungry.

It is important to take a break every two hours, even if you aren't tired.



## **Avoid fatigue** *(continued)*

Don't wait for the next town or a petrol station, use the regularly spaced rest areas along most major roads, which offer a place to take a break away from the traffic.

Follow these tips to avoid fatigue when behind the wheel:

- plan not to be driving when you would normally be sleeping
- never remain behind the wheel for longer than two hours without a break
- stop and rest whenever you feel tired
- swap drivers at least every two hours if possible
- if you are the alternate driver, make sure you rest between driving
- when you stop, get out and stretch, get some fresh air and top up your fluids
- make sure fresh air is continually circulating through the vehicle's cabin
- avoid alcohol and medicines that make you drowsy

## **Overcoming fatigue**

There are many myths about how you can overcome fatigue, but the only proven way is to sleep.

While power naps can be of some use, ultimately you need to give your body the rest it needs and this is only achieved by a long uninterrupted sleep.

Remember, fatigue does not only affect people on long trips. Anyone who has been sleep-deprived or been awake for more than 17 hours is at risk of being fatigued.

## **Fatigue and road crashes**

- Being awake for 17 hours straight produces the same level of driving impairment as a blood alcohol level content of 0.05 and doubles your risk of being involved in a crash.
- It is believed that 15% of serious injury crashes and 30% of fatal crashes occur due to fatigue.

