



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Don't Sleep and Drive*

*Drowsy Driving Prevention Week — November 8–14, 2010*

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*[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Driving while not fully alert is more dangerous than you might think. Dr. Anne Wheaton is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of driving while drowsy. Welcome to the show, Anne.

[Dr. Wheaton] Thank you for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Anne, how many crashes are caused each year by people driving while not fully alert?

[Dr. Wheaton] Drowsy driving is a major contributor to an estimated hundred thousand crashes per year. This results in forty thousand injuries and more than fifteen hundred deaths nationwide.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do certain jobs put people at higher risk for sleep deprivation that results in their driving while drowsy?

[Dr. Wheaton] Commercial drivers are at risk because of the great number of miles that they drive and they drive for long stretches of time. Individuals that work irregular hours are at risk, especially if they work at night or work long shifts. And anyone who travels a lot for business is in danger. They may suffer the consequences of jet lag, they may not be getting enough sleep, and then get on the road.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are certain age groups more likely to drive while drowsy?

[Dr. Wheaton] Younger people are at most risk. This includes adolescents and people in their early twenties. They combine a lifestyle that favors not getting enough sleep with less experience behind the wheel.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are there warning signs for drivers that they might be too drowsy to drive?

[Dr. Wheaton] Yes, Bob. Some signs include having trouble keeping your eyes open, yawning, having trouble maintaining your lane, or hitting rumble strips.

[Dr. Gaynes] If sleep deprivation is responsible for a lot of drowsy driving, how much sleep does a person need each day?

[Dr. Wheaton] Adults need between seven to nine hours per night, but adolescents need more – at least eight and a half hours.

[Dr. Gaynes] Since this is such a serious problem, are any states making it illegal to drive while drowsy?

[Dr. Wheaton] Many states have laws that would allow drowsy drivers to be charged with anything from reckless driving all the way to vehicular homicide.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about the dangers of driving while drowsy?

[Dr. Wheaton] Listeners can go to [www.drowsydriving.org](http://www.drowsydriving.org). It's a site from the National Sleep Foundation.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Anne. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Anne Wheaton about the dangers of driving while drowsy.

Remember - The warning signs that tell you it's time to get off the road are trouble keeping your eyes open, yawning, drifting from your lane, or hitting rumble strips. Pull off the road and take a short nap or get some coffee. Driving while drowsy is a disaster waiting to happen.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.