

Dangers of drowsy driving

By ACSH Staff — January 4, 2013

You may want to be careful the next time you go for a drive make sure you re up for it. A [new study](#) [1] conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 1 in 24 U.S. adults say they recently fell asleep while driving. And study authors think that number could be even higher.

Although earlier studies reached similar conclusions, this CDC study was larger and more comprehensive. It included 147,000 adults who responded to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System telephone survey conducted in 19 states and the District of Columbia in 2009 and 2010. In addition to reporting that about 4 percent of adults have nodded off or fallen asleep at least once within the month prior to the survey, the study also found that drowsy driving was more common in men, people aged 25-34 and those who slept an average of less than six hours per night.

According to Dr. Gregory Belenky, director of Washington State University s Sleep and Performance Research Center, these alarming numbers point to a common problem a lot of people are getting insufficient sleep. And the government estimates that 3 percent of fatal traffic accidents involve drowsy drivers although that number has been reported as being as high as 33 percent. Why such a large uncertainty interval, we asked? Perhaps the data collectors needed a nap.

Ultimately, drivers should pay attention to warning signals of impending somnolence, such as feeling very tired, not remembering the last mile or two or drifting into rumble strips on the side of the road, and take these as a notice to get off the road according to Anne Wheaton of the CDC. But, ACSH s Dr. Gilbert Ross adds, people don t pull over, we re in too much of a hurry. Maybe we should think about slowing down a little.

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[1] http://www.ksl.com/?sid=23602271&nid=201&title=cdc-1-in-24-admit-nodding-off-while-driving&s_cid=queue-1