

# The UK Department for Transport found that at least 10% of accidents on UK roads are due to tiredness; an amount that can be doubled (20%) for motorways and other monotonous roads.

Fall-asleep crashes are much more likely to result in death or serious injury, owing to the higher speed at impact. About half of these crashes are work-related. Sadly, about 10 people a week die on our roads as a result of driver tiredness. Fatigue can lead to errors and accidents, ill-health and injury and reduced productivity.

### Fatigue and work

Fatigue needs to be managed like any other risk at work. Recent studies in the UK have found that a quarter of us are risking our health by refusing to take a break at work. And a third of us skip lunch in order to cope with our workloads.

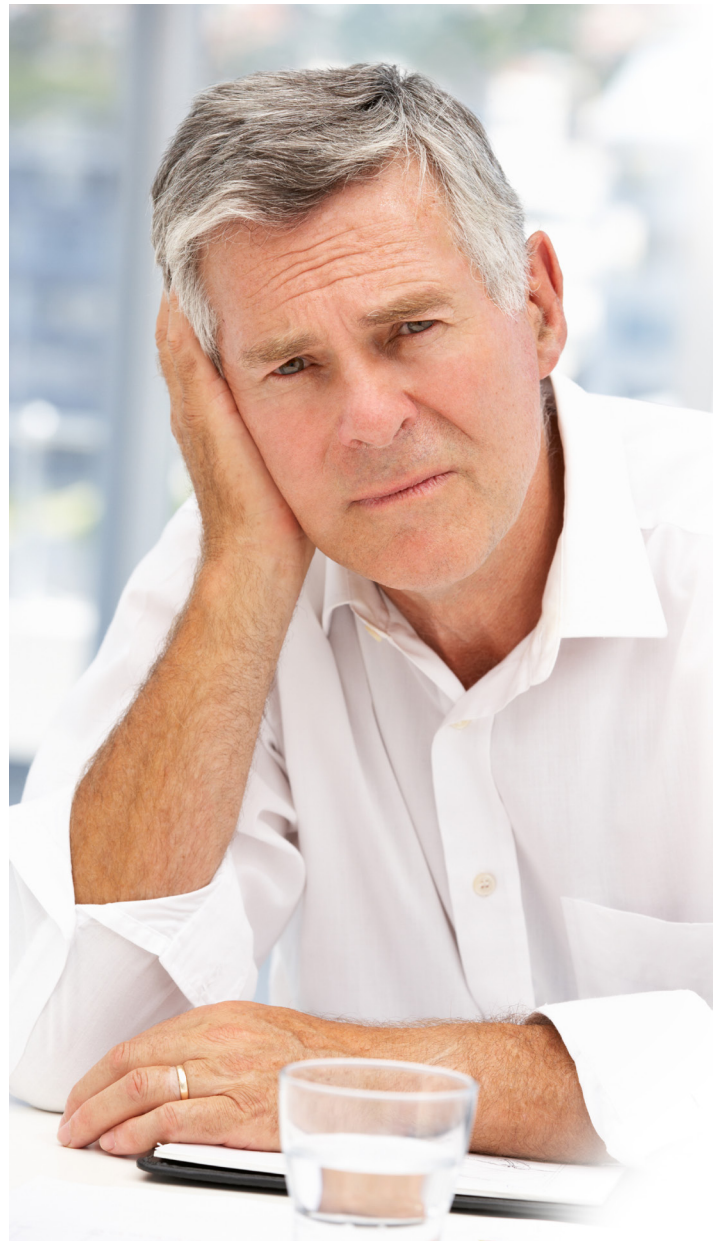
People who understand the importance of rest and recovery are more efficient and productive at work and have more positive relationships in their personal lives.

Shift patterns can also make you more likely to fall asleep or experience high levels of fatigue. Our alertness is lowest between 2 and 6 am and you are 13 times more likely to have an accident due to tiredness.

### Feeling tired all the time

Feeling exhausted is so common that it has its own acronym, TATT, which stands for 'tired all the time'. At any given time, one in five people feels unusually tired and one in 10 have prolonged fatigue, according to the Royal College of Psychiatrists. Women tend to feel tired more than men.

There are lots of health complaints that can make you feel tired. Not just the well-recognised ones like anaemia and thyroid problems, but also more surprising ailments, such as diabetes and food intolerance. Being overweight or underweight can cause tiredness. If you are overweight, then your body has to work harder to carry out everyday activities. If you are underweight, then you have less muscle strength and so tire more easily.



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Psychological tiredness is far more common than tiredness that's caused by a physical problem. One key reason is anxiety which can cause insomnia and, in turn, lead to persistent fatigue. The worries and strains of daily life can be exhausting, including even positive events, such as moving house or getting married. Emotional shock, such as bad news, bereavement or the break-up of a relationship, can make you feel drained. Mental health problems such as depression or anxiety can make you feel more tired. They can also prevent you from getting a proper night's sleep.

It may be common to feel tired all the time but it isn't normal. If you're worried, see your doctor for advice and reassurance.

### Epworth Sleepiness Assessment

The following questionnaire will help you measure your general level of daytime sleepiness. Answers are rated on a reliable scale called the Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) – the same assessment tool used by sleep experts worldwide. Each item describes a routine daytime situation. Use the scale below to rate the likelihood that you would doze off or fall asleep (in contrast to just feeling tired) during that activity. If you haven't done some of these things recently, consider how you think they would affect you.

**0 - No chance of falling asleep**

**1 - Slight chance of dozing**

**2 - Moderate chance of dozing**

**3 - High chance of dozing**

Situation	Score
Sitting and reading	
Watching TV	
Sitting inactive in a public place (e.g. a theatre or a meeting)	
As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break	
Lying down to rest in the afternoon when circumstances permit	
Sitting and talking to someone	
Sitting quietly after a lunch without alcohol	
In a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic	

### 0 - 10 Lower risk of daytime sleepiness

This places you in the lower risk bracket which means that your sleep is not affecting you during the daytime and you have a normal amount of sleepiness. If you find your level of sleepiness increases please retake this assessment and follow the advice.

### 11 - 15 Mild risk of daytime sleepiness

This places you in the lower risk bracket which means that your sleep is not affecting you during the daytime and you have a normal amount of sleepiness. If you find your level of sleepiness increases please retake this assessment and follow the advice.

### 16 - 19 Moderate risk of daytime sleepiness

This places you in the moderate risk bracket which means that you should seek professional advice from your GP or a sleep clinic and should be very careful if operating machinery or driving. It is natural to have a 'dip' in the afternoon, but if the daytime sleepiness persists throughout much of the day, then your sleep is too short or is being disturbed (e.g. heavy snoring) in a way that you may not realise and it's time to seek advice.

### 20 - 24 High risk of daytime sleepiness

This places you in the high risk bracket which means that you should seriously consider seeking professional advice from your GP, a sleep clinic or medical professional and should be very careful if operating machinery or driving.



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