

Feeling fatigued while driving? Don't reach for your iPod

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Research has shown that drinking caffeinated beverages and listening to music are two popular fatigue-fighting measures that drivers take, but very few studies have tested the usefulness of those measures. New research to be presented at the HFES 2014 Annual Meeting in Chicago evaluates which method, if either, can successfully combat driver fatigue.

In their paper titled "Comparison of Caffeine and Music as Fatigue Countermeasures in Simulated Driving Tasks," human factors/ergonomics researchers ShiXu Liu, Shengji Yao, and Allan Spence designed a simulated driving study that measured [driver fatigue](#) levels against the use of [caffeine](#), [music](#), or no stimulant. Twenty participants completed three 120-minute driving sessions over a three-day span at the same time each day, then scored their fatigue levels on a questionnaire.

Results indicated that drivers who used either caffeine or music as a stimulant felt significantly less tired than those who did not. The researchers noted, however, that those who drank a caffeinated beverage to stay awake performed their driving tasks much better than those who listened to music or those in the control group.

"Even though both caffeine and music keep drivers feeling more awake, caffeine also helps them maintain good driving performance," said Liu, a graduate student in McMaster University's Department of Mechanical Engineering. "Music, on the other hand, can distract drivers, which may

explain why [driving](#) performance is not significantly improved when it is used as a fatigue countermeasure."

Provided by Human Factors and Ergonomics Society

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