

# Almost half of Americans have been sleepy behind the wheel

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(HealthDay)—Nearly half of American adults admit that they've fought

to stay awake while driving, a new survey finds.

Of the more than 2,000 respondents, 45% said they'd struggled to remain awake while behind the wheel, while 48% said they'd never driven drowsy, according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) survey conducted in September.

Each year in the United States, [drowsy driving](#) causes an average of 328,000 crashes, including 6,400 [fatal accidents](#), according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. National Drowsy Driving Prevention Week is Nov. 3 to 10.

"Driving while drowsy is similar to drunk driving with regards to the delays in [reaction time](#) and impairment in decision-making," AASM president Dr. Kelly Carden said in an academy news release. "Drowsy driving can be deadly, yet it is 100% preventable."

Warning signs of drowsy driving include: frequent yawning or inability to keep your eyes open; nodding off or having trouble keeping your head up; not remembering driving the last few miles; missing [road](#) signs or driving past your turn; following too close to cars in front of you; drifting into the other lane of traffic; driving onto the rumble strip or the shoulder of the road.

To prevent drowsy driving, you should: get enough sleep before driving; avoid driving late at night or while alone, if possible, and share the driving with a passenger on long trips; consume caffeine for a short-term boost in alertness; or pull over at a rest stop and take a nap if you begin to feel drowsy.

"Caffeine can provide a short-term boost, but if you're having trouble keeping your eyes open, then it's definitely time to pull over," Carden said.

"Turning up the music or rolling down the windows will not keep you alert while driving. The best option is to get off the road and take a nap if you feel sleepy behind the wheel," she advised.

"There is no substitute for healthy sleep," Carden added. "Regular, healthy sleep is essential for staying awake at the wheel and protecting yourself and others from avoidable, potentially life-threatening accidents on the road."

**More information:** The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has more on [drowsy driving](#).

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