TOMPKINS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
Your Partner for a Healthy Community

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Drowsy Driving – The Newest Advice

We've all had the experience of being drowsy on the road. We've often followed the advice of turning up the radio, rolling down the window and turning up the air conditioner. However, these techniques have been found not to be effective. The only safe thing for drivers to do if they start to feel tired while driving is to get off the road and rest until no longer drowsy. The warning signs of drowsy driving include frequent yawning or blinking, difficulty remembering the past few miles driven, missing exits, drifting from one's lane or hitting a rumble strip.

The prevalence of falling asleep while driving (as reported by drivers themselves) during the previous month of a study reported by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration was 4.2%. Persons who reported snoring or usually sleeping less than 6 hours a day were more likely to report falling asleep while driving.

Other risk factors include, being a long distance commercial driver, working at night or working long shifts, having an untreated sleep disorder, use of sedating medications, and use of alcohol before driving. Persons that should especially be concerned are those who work night shifts, rotating shifts or very long shifts. People with sleep associated disorders should consult their physician, as these conditions are often treatable.

Drowsy driving is dangerous. Sleep related crashes are more likely to happen at night or during the mid-afternoon when drivers are more likely to be sleepy. There often a single vehicle accident where the vehicle goes off the road, with no evidence of braking or attempts to prevent the crash. Sleep related crashes also make up a disproportionate portion of rear end and head on collisions. Drowsy driving crashes are more likely to result in injuries and fatalities than non-drowsy driving crashes.

We urge you to be alert to these warning signs of sleep impaired driving. We also urge you not rely on conventional advice listed above, but rather pull off the road and rest until no longer drowsy. Doing so can save your life and the lives of others.

Cervical Cancer Screening

Trends from 2000-2010 in screening for women between the ages's of 18-30 years of age.

The recommendations for cervical cancer screening have changed over the years. This is based on newer scientific data regarding the behavior of cervical cancer and the effectiveness of cervical cancer screening and the vaccination of women and men with human papillomavirus vaccine.

As of 2012, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, The American Cancer Society, and The United States Preventive Task Force agreed on the following:

1. Screening by Pap test should not be used for women less than 21 years of age regardless of the initiation of sexual activity.
2. A screening interval of 3 years should be maintained for women between 21-30 years of age, with a recommendation explicitly against yearly screening.

The Centers for Disease Control, surveying women between the ages 18 and 30 years, found that as of 2012 women were tending to begin to follow these newest guidelines.

However, in women between 22 and 30 years who should have been screened every 3 years, the proportion reported never having had a pap test increased. The increase was from 6.6% to 9%.

The recommendations against more frequent Pap smear testing have been based on the newest scientific data. This data shows that frequent testing can lead to overtreatment of women and that can lead to harm associated with diagnostic procedures and even adverse birth outcomes.

The newest scientific information about the behavior of cervical cancers indicates that the new screening guidelines will effectively prevent undetected cancer in women while insuring their safety and the most appropriate application of the screening test of the Pap smear. Human papillomavirus vaccine is expected to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer substantially. This is because human papillomavirus is a very strong factor (amongst others) leading to cervical cancer. Vaccination of women will greatly help to limit the influence of this virus in them. Vaccination of men will help to decrease the propagation of this virus in the community to women and also to prevent forms of cancer and HPV associated warts which men can experience.

— William Klepack, M.D.