

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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Travel Safety

Introduction

It is that time of the year where families are loading up their vehicles and setting out for road trips to see relatives and friends for the holidays. Before heading out on your vacation this holiday season, here are some recommendations to promote safety while traveling.

Adequate Rest

Did you know?

- Over 100,000 crashes occur each year secondary to fatigued drivers
- Fifty-five percent of drowsy driving crashes are caused by drivers under the age of twenty-five
- Being awake for eighteen hours is equal to a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.08%, which is legally drunk and leaves you at equal risk for a crash

Signs of driving while drowsy:

- Difficulty focusing, frequent blinking, or heavy eyelids
- Daydreaming
- Trouble remembering the last few miles driven; missing exits

- Yawning repeatedly or rubbing your eyes
- Trouble keeping your head up
- Drifting from your lane, tailgating, or hitting a shoulder rumble strip

How to avoid drowsy driving:

- Get adequate rest the night before- for ages eighteen and older, the recommended sleep duration is seven to nine hours
- Plan to drive long trips with a companion
- Schedule regular stops
- Avoid alcohol and other depressants
- Pull over if you notice the signs of being drowsy

Movement

Long distance traveling can put you at the risk for developing a blood clot, also known as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). If part of the clot breaks off and travels to the lungs, a sudden blockage of arteries within the lung can occur, known as a pulmonary embolism (PE), which can be fatal. Traveling puts you at risk for these conditions because sitting for a long period of time can create

damage and slow blood flow in the veins of your legs.

Factors that increase the chance of developing a DVT:

- Previous blood clot
- Family history of blood clots
- Known clotting disorder
- Recent surgery, injury, or hospitalization
- Use of estrogen-containing birth control or hormone replacement therapy
- Current or recent pregnancy
- Older age
- Obesity
- Active cancer or undergoing chemotherapy
- Other serious illnesses such as congestive heart failure or inflammatory bowel disease
- Limited movement

Preventing DVT:

- If traveling by airplane, select an aisle seat so when possible you can walk around every 2-3 hours
- If traveling by car, include breaks to stretch and walk around

- Exercise your calf muscles and stretch your legs while you're sitting



Symptoms of DVT:

- Swelling, pain, or tenderness in the affected limb
- Unexplained pain or tenderness
- Skin that is red and warm to the touch

Symptoms of PE:

- Difficulty breathing
- Faster than normal heartbeat
- Chest pain that usually gets worse when you cough or breathe deeply
- Coughing up blood
- Low blood pressure/feelings of lightheadedness or fainting

If you have symptoms of DVT or PE, you should seek immediate medical care from a doctor.

Be Smart and Alert

- Follow the laws- buckle up, drive the speed limit, use caution in work zones, and don't follow another vehicle too closely
- Give your full attention to the road- avoid distractions such as cell phones
- Pay attention to surroundings such as other vehicles, pedestrians, and deer
- Be aware of weather and road conditions
- Pay attention to your gas tank, tire pressure and other vehicle maintenance throughout your trip
- If you have car trouble, pull off the road as far as possible

Be Prepared

According to the Liberty Mutual Insurance New Beginnings Report, forty-five percent of the population does not check that proper emergency items are in the car prior to traveling. In order to be properly prepared for a car emergency, every traveler should have an emergency kit.

What should be included in road safety emergency kits?

- Flashlight
- Water bottles
- First aid kit
- Cell phone charger
- Jumper cables
- Tool set

This report also stated sixty percent of Americans forget windshield wiper fluid and while sixty-six percent of Americans report to checking tire pressure before a road trip, only twenty-eight percent report to checking the pressure in their spare tire. Prior to your road trip, it is important to check these areas. In addition to vehicle maintenance, be sure to clean your headlights, taillights, signal lights, and windows to help you see, especially at night.

References

- <https://sleepfoundation.org>
- <http://drowsydriving.org/about/detection-and-prevention/>
- <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/highway-safety#On-the-Highway>
- <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/dvt>
- <https://www.libertymutualgroup.com/about-lm/news/news-release-archive/articles/on-the-road-and-at-home-americans-planning-for-new-beginnings-for-summer>

Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Karinda Polk, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.