- Also, senior centers and religious and other local service groups often offer transportation services for older adults in your community.

Who can I call for help with transportation?

- Call the ElderCare Locator at **1-800-677-1116** and ask for the phone number of your local Office on Aging, or go to their website at **www.eldercare.gov**.

- Contact your regional transit authority, which can tell you which bus or train to take.

- Call Easter Seals Project ACTION (Accessible Community Transportation In Our Nation) at **1-800-659-6428** or go to their website at **www.easterseals.com/transportation.**

Where can I find out more about sleep apnea and its treatment?

- Your first step is to talk with your doctor. You can also contact the:

- National Sleep Foundation
  202-347-3471
  www.sleepfoundation.org

- American Academy of Sleep Medicine
  507-287-6006
  www.aasmnet.org

- You also can get a copy of Facts about Sleep Apnea from the National Institutes of Health by going to **www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/diseases/sleepapnea/sleepapnea_whatis.html.** More information about driving also is available from the National Institute on Aging's "Age Page On Older Drivers" by calling **1-800-222-2225**, or by going to their website at: **www.niapublications.org/engagepages/drivers.asp.**

Wear your safety belt

Always wear your safety belt when you are driving or riding in a car. Make sure that every person who is riding with you also is buckled up. Wear your safety belt even if your car has air bags.

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

National Sleep Foundation

www.nhtsa.dot.gov
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Driving When You Have Sleep Apnea

Driving when you have sleep apnea

- For most people, driving represents freedom, control and independence. Driving enables most people to get to the places they want or need to go. For many people, driving is important economically – some drive as part of their job or to get to and from work. Others drive to be able to shop for necessities, to maintain social connections or engage in activities.
- Driving is a complex skill. Our ability to drive safely can be affected by changes in our physical, emotional and mental health. The goal of this brochure is to help you, your family and your health care professional talk about how sleep apnea may affect your ability to drive safely.

What is sleep apnea?

- Sleep apnea is a condition in which breathing is interrupted during sleep. This results in a decrease in the oxygen level in your blood. Your body reacts by partially or completely awakening each time you stop breathing. This may occur many times over the course of the night.

  As a result, you do not get the necessary deep sleep you need. People with untreated sleep apnea often wake up feeling sleepy and remain sleepy throughout the day.

How can sleep apnea affect my driving?

- Because sleep apnea affects your sleep, it also affects how you function during the day. Untreated sleep apnea can make it difficult for you to stay awake, to focus your eyes, to remain alert and to react quickly to driving situations. If you are very tired or find yourself falling asleep while at work or at home, you should not drive. It is unsafe for you and others on the road.
- Many sleep apnea patients say they never fall asleep while driving. That may be true. But remember, you don't have to fall asleep to have a crash. You simply have to be inattentive or not sharp – and with untreated sleep apnea, you are not as sharp as you should be.

Can I still drive if I have sleep apnea?

- Most likely yes, if your condition is treated the right way. But don't drive if you are not being treated. Treatment offers the best hope of being able to continue your independent driving. It is rare that an effective treatment cannot be found for sleep apnea, but other health issues may complicate the treatment plan.

  It is critical that you fully use the treatment provided by your doctor. When driving, you should ensure that you are fully alert. If not, switch drivers, nap and also drink a caffeinated beverage.

  When driving, have someone with you in the car to make sure that you are not falling asleep; do this until you are sure that your sleep apnea treatment is successful. After treatment begins, you should be assessed for daytime sleepiness.
- Ask your doctor, the state motor vehicle authority, or another knowledgeable source about the laws concerning sleep apnea and driving in your community.

What can I do when sleep apnea affects my driving?

- Talk with your doctor. There are a number of lifestyle changes that he or she can recommend. Effective treatments such as medical or dental devices can be prescribed. Avoid alcohol. Alcohol at night can worsen sleep apnea. Alcohol in the daytime can worsen sleepiness. Sleep apnea is a serious, potentially life-threatening condition that should not be ignored and self-treatment is not recommended.

What if I have to cut back or give up on driving?

- If sleep apnea or daytime sleepiness persists, you should seek additional medical help. During this time, depend on others for driving. You can keep your independence even if you have to cut back or give up on your driving. It may take planning ahead on your part, but this can help get you to the places you want to go and the people you want to see. Consider:
  - rides with family and friends;
  - taxi cabs;
  - shuttle buses or vans;
  - public buses, trains and subways; and
  - walking.