

State of Health and Fatigue: Think About It Before Getting Behind the Wheel!



What is fatigue?

Fatigue is a biological state that neither willpower, nor experience, nor motivation can overcome. Its effects interfere significantly with driver performance, regardless of driving experience. Fatigue is one of the leading causes of death on Québec roads.

Types of fatigue

There are two types of fatigue that can negatively affect your driving ability: physical fatigue and mental fatigue.

PHYSICAL FATIGUE

Physical fatigue occurs after carrying out physically demanding tasks, such as repeatedly lifting heavy loads at work or working out. This type of activity exhausts your muscles, making them slower to react and less able to exert strength.

At the wheel, physical fatigue results in a longer reaction time and imprecise or incorrect motor responses. For example, you may use the brakes less efficiently because you take longer to move your leg and find the brake pedal with your foot, and then have less strength to press down on the pedal.

MENTAL FATIGUE

Mental fatigue at the wheel results in diminished vigilance, concentration and attention, and also reduces your ability to make good decisions—in short, it reduces your ability to drive safely.



Health and fatigue

A high level of fatigue will affect your physical and psychological well-being, as well as your ability to drive safely. Extreme fatigue can also be a sign of a health issue, for example:

- heart failure;
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
- sleep apnea;
- multiple sclerosis;
- anxiety or depression;
- diabetes or anemia;
- thyroid disease;
- chronic pain;
- inflammatory disease;
- cancer.

Talk to your physician or with other health care professionals to find out what is causing your fatigue. In most cases, a health care professional will be able to review your medication and optimize your treatment. If, unfortunately, the fatigue persists with your condition, learn to manage it with the help of your health care team. Only drive when you have enough energy, and budget enough time to complete your activities, including travel.

Progression of your state of health

In Québec, all drivers must meet certain requirements with regard to their state of health and eyesight. They are required to notify the SAAQ of any changes to their physical or mental condition that could hinder their ability to drive. Listen to your body and do not drive if you are not in a condition to do so safely. There are many other ways to get around!

If you have doubts regarding your ability to drive due to your state of health, talk to your physician and follow his or her recommendations. After you receive appropriate treatment, your condition could improve to the point where you may safely resume driving. If you must stop driving, talk to those close to you about the transportation possibilities available to you.

Ensure your own safety and the safety of other road users.

For more information, visit the “Health of Drivers” section on the SAAQ’s website.