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# Opinions

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## March snow? Tips to handle a pre-spring storm

### AAA offers winter driving advice

By AAA of Western and Central New York

Just when you thought spring was here, don't put away those winter driving skills! Winter weather isn't over yet, and the New York region is seeing snow along with slippery roads. AAA has tips to keep everyone safe.

About 46% of crashes involving bad weather take place in the winter, making this the worst time of year for driving in treacherous conditions – even if spring is set to arrive next week.

AAA's top three winter driving tips include slowing down; increasing space between yourself and other vehicles; and braking, then turning.

Additional important notes: If you go off the road, remain calm, and stay in your car with your seat

belt on. If you are in an emergency situation, call 911. If you get stranded in your car, only exit the vehicle to clear the tailpipe of deep snow to ensure proper ventilation, then return to the car, put your seat belt on, and keep your window cracked open a bit until help arrives.

A digital roadside request is the fastest way to request AAA service. Simply go to [www.AAA.com/RoadService](http://www.AAA.com/RoadService) or download the AAA mobile app. To place a phone call, dial 1-800-AAA-HELP.

**Tips for Driving in Snow**  
 ✓ **Accelerate and decelerate slowly.** Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry. Remember: It takes longer to slow down on icy roads.

✓ **Increase following distances.** The normal dry pavement following distance of three to four seconds should be increased to eight to 10 seconds. This increased margin of safety will provide the longer distance needed if you have to stop.

✓ **Know your brakes.** Whether you have antilock brakes or not, the best way to stop is threshold braking. Keep the heel of your foot on the floor and use the ball of your foot to apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal.

✓ **Don't power up hills.** Applying extra gas on snow-covered roads may only result in spinning your wheels. Try to get a little inertia going before you reach the hill, and let that inertia carry you to the top. As you reach the

crest of the hill, reduce your speed and proceed downhill as slowly as possible.

✓ **Don't stop going up a hill.** It's difficult to move up a hill on an icy road. If possible, get your vehicle moving on a flat roadway first before taking on a hill.

✓ **If possible, stay home.** If you really don't have to go out, don't. Even if you can drive well in the snow, not everyone else can.

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 862,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com).

## Being sleepless in Seattle, Buffalo – or anywhere – may spell trouble for your heart

American Heart Association says science shows good sleep habits are essential for heart health

Guest Editorial by the American Heart Association

Scientific researchers have noticed a marked increase in heart attacks and strokes in the days following the change to daylight saving time each spring. However, the American Heart Association, the leading global health organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, says losing sleep anytime can be a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

"Getting a good night's sleep every night is vital to cardiovascular health. Adults should aim for an average of seven to nine hours, and babies and kids need more depending on their age," said Donald M. Lloyd-Jones, M.D., Sc.M., FAHA, past volunteer president of the American Heart Association, and chair of the department of preventive medicine, the Eileen M. Foell Professor of Heart Research and professor of preventive medicine, medicine and pediatrics at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. "Unfortunately, we know that as many as one in three people do not get their recommended amount of sleep each night."

According to Lloyd-Jones, the amount of sleep and quality of sleep are important, and both can have significant impacts on cardiovascular health, as well as overall

health. In addition to increasing risk for cardiovascular conditions like heart attack and stroke, lack of sleep may also put people at risk of things like depression, cognitive decline and obesity.

New research in the Journal of the American Heart Association shows maintaining a consistent sleep pattern may play an important role in preventing cardiovascular disease. Researchers found that falling asleep at different times or sleeping an inconsistent number of hours each night, even variations of more than two hours a night within the same week, were tied to developing hardened arteries, known as atherosclerosis.

"We know that people who get adequate sleep manage other health factors better, as well, such as weight, blood sugar and blood pressure," Lloyd-Jones said. "The American Heart Association recently added sleep to the list of factors that support optimal cardiovascular health. We call these 'Life's Essential 8,' and they include: eating a healthy diet, not smoking or vaping, being physically active and getting adequate sleep, along with controlling your blood pressure and maintaining healthy levels of cholesterol and lipids, healthy blood sugar levels and a healthy weight."

Lloyd-Jones noted that making even small changes in daily habits can make a big difference in sleep quality. Here are some tips the American Heart Association recommends:

✓ **Make healthy living a habit:** Eat a balanced diet, get regular physical activity and manage stress to support a healthier night's sleep.

✓ **Set the alarm – for morning and night:** Stick to specific times to go to bed and wake up each day, and commit to a consistent sleep schedule as much as possible. Along with a wake-up alarm, try a bedtime alarm to indicate it's time to start winding down.

✓ **Establish bedtime habits:** Once your bedtime alarm goes off, move into a familiar ritual, like brushing your teeth, washing your face or taking a warm bath.

✓ **Relax and unwind:** Take a few minutes to de-stress, consider reading, journaling, meditating or listening to music to ease into a good night's rest.

✓ **Take a technology break:** A bedroom free of light and technology will equate to better sleep, so keep your phone and other devices away from the bed. Try logging off your electronic devices at least an hour before bedtime.

Getting to sleep can be tricky for some people, however, sleep sup-

plements should be used sparingly, and only under the advice of a health care clinician. It's also very important to consider the possibility of a sleep disorder like sleep apnea or insomnia. These conditions can increase a person's risk of heart disease and stroke, and should be treated appropriately to improve the quality and duration of sleep, as well as overall health.

"While it may take a while to make falling asleep and staying asleep a habit, taking the time to develop and then stick with a good, natural bedtime routine is important," Lloyd-Jones said. "When first starting out, don't lie in bed tossing and turning if you're restless. Get up and try a few things to sooth your mind, maybe write out a to-do list for the next day, read a few pages of a good book or do some yoga stretches. Just make one small change at a time, adding a new one every week or so until you find what works best for you. Soon you'll be sleeping soundly through the night and waking up refreshed each morning, knowing you're being good to yourself and to your heart."

Learn more about the importance of sleep for heart health at [heart.org](http://heart.org).

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**PUBLISHER**  
Skip Mazenauer  
**GM/MANAGING EDITOR**  
Joshua Maloni  
**EDITOR IN CHIEF/SENTINEL EDITOR**  
Terrence P. Duffy  
**WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR**  
Joshua Maloni  
**ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES**  
Colleen Rebmann, Jeff Calarco,  
Marcy Lombardo  
**ACCOUNTING/OFFICE MANAGER**  
Kim Stacharczyk  
**ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT**  
Jennifer Walowitz

**PRODUCTION MANAGER/  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER**  
Wendy Juzwicki  
**CLASSIFIED MANAGER**  
Wendy Puffer  
**CIRCULATION**  
Kim Stacharczyk  
**CONTRIBUTING  
PHOTOGRAPHERS/REPORTERS**  
Michael J. Billoni,  
Kevin and Dawn Cobello,  
Michael DePietro, Karen Keefe,  
Nathan Keefe, Wayne Peters,  
Mark Williams Jr., David Yarger

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1859 Whitehaven Road  
Grand Island, N.Y. 14072

Phone 716-773-7676  
Fax 716-773-7190

Editorial:

Dispatch@wnypapers.com  
Sentinel@wnypapers.com

Advertising:

NFPDesign@wnypapers.com

Classifieds:

NFPClassifieds@wnypapers.com

Circulation:

NFPCirculation@wnypapers.com

Legals:

legalnotice@wnypapers.com

Website:

wnypapers.com

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