

# For Safety

## MOTORCYCLE ISOMETRICS

### OUTMANEUVERING RIDER FATIGUE

By Brad Zimmerman  
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Getting there can sometimes mean survival. It's late afternoon and you've got 250 miles to go before you can snuggle into a motel room bed at the next city. The biggest problem getting from where you are to that 19-inch color TV, ice machine and hard bed isn't the road conditions, gas stops or tire wear. It's fatigue--one of the biggest killers around. When you're tired, beat, whipped, worn to a frazzle or just plain "tuckered out," the odds of being in an accident rise dramatically - if you push hard and far enough, it's almost a guarantee that the next bed you crawl into will be at City General Hospital rather than the Holiday Inn.

Fatigue comes quickly when you're riding a motorcycle - even sooner than if you are driving a car. The sound of wind, tires, chain and passing trucks play an important role in bringing on fatigue. In many cases, the lack of a radio also makes the distance seem farther.

Most riders make the mistake of assuming that because they're on a bike, the chances of dozing off while riding are nil. Don't believe it. We have actually been with two riders who have fallen asleep, still held on the throttle and continued on down the road. Both, fortunately, ended up in soft grass medians, but it proved a point. You can fall asleep at the wheel - even if the wheel happens to be handlebars.

Fortunately, there are many ways to keep you alert while traveling. The most common method of "keeping it on the road" involves an orally consumed chemical stimulant that not only races through the digestive system at an amazingly fast rate, but leaps into your nervous system, bringing the body up to a higher than normal state. The drug? Coffee. Good old American 100-mile coffee. It contains caffeine, a wonderful little substance that keeps truckers and tired folks on the road. If you're really looking for a "buzz" go to the hard stuff-tea, which has more caffeine than coffee.

### EXERCISE RECOMMENDED

Pills like Nu-Doze (but nothing stronger) can keep many riders awake. With "stay awake" pills you come "up" and alert very quickly and suddenly. You come "down" the same way. If you must use these pills, read the directions thoroughly. They tell you how long a pill is supposed to last before wearing off. Make sure you take the next one on time to avoid the sudden drop off in energy. Better not to use them! Believe it or not, the absolute best way to stay awake is through plain old exercise. If you get off the bike and do some hustling around (more than from the saddle to the throne and onto the coffee shop booth), you can return to a high alert status. And you won't be racing to the next rest stop because of killer coffee.

The technique of exercising at a rest stop is used in some parts of Europe, specifically on the high speed Autobahn. The rest areas include the standard flush toilets and picnic tables, but are also equipped with chin-up bars, swings, parallel bars, padded areas and in a couple of places a small oval track for jogging. It keeps travelers not only healthy, but alive. Try it at your next rest stop when you're tired (or even when not, to increase your alertness).

Do a few sit-ups, jog around a bit, a handful of jumping jacks and such. Exercise for a least 15 minutes, or until you start to get small beads of sweat on your forehead. Don't do a boxer's training camp workout. You may die of pneumonia when you get back on your bike at 55 mph, four-hour-run. Just get all the muscles swarn, working and awake.

One rider we know hates to exercise to stay awake, but has found a suitable alternative punishment. When he gets drowsy he parks his bike on the shoulder and jogs away for about a quarter mile. Then he stops, walks back slowly to the bike and continues down the road. The only drawback is traffic. They wonder for miles why you are running away from your bike.

Even if the rest stop or the jogging doesn't appeal to you, there are other exercises (isometrics) that you can actually do while riding. Naturally, you have to be careful not to Jack Lalane yourself into a ditch, and these exercises require fairly open roads. If you try them while splitting traffic lanes you'll soon find out how good your medical insurance is.

Isometrics exercises are simple on a motorcycle - you simply push and pull against the machine. Starting with your arms, push the handlebars as though you want them to go forward. Pushing on the bars hard for 20 seconds, followed by a 20 second rest and few repeats will help wake up the upper body. You can ward off cramps of the hands and wrists by squeezing the grips as tightly as possible, then relaxing and repeating. Alternate one finger at a time if they're getting cold. Since the exercises increase circulation, they'll help to warm you free of charge.

Forearms can be warmed by grabbing the bars securely and pulling upward. This tightens and warms the muscles on the lower arm, from wrist to elbow. There are three basic leg exercises. Make sure your heels are hooked securely on the pegs and push forward with your calf muscles. Then change to a direct downward push, using your upper thigh muscles. The final leg exercise is the best - lift your rear about two inches off the seat and remain in a seated crouch. This works the back of your thighs and gives the rear end muscles a break.

Neck muscle stiffness can be relieved by using your left hand to push on your helmet (first forward a few times, then backward) as you counter push with the neck muscles. Shoulders can be uncramped by pushing on the bars, alternating the right and left arm's pressure to work each side independently.

At all times, you must not jeopardize your control of the motorcycle if you perform these exercises while moving. There are many experienced motorcyclists who possess such familiarity with their machines that movements, such as described, do not interfere with either alertness or rider control. Heavily laden motorcycles, or the presence of a passenger are not ideal conditions for such exercise. It would be best for you to stop and exercise or take a coffee break to revitalize your alertness before continuing with the ride.

### BRAIN EXERCISE

The final and most important muscle you should exercise is your brain. You get tired through a combination of fatigue and boredom. If your brain doesn't have anything worthwhile to do, it wants to shut down for a rest - which could be permanent. We've never come across any mental games or brain exercises that will keep you entranced for hours. There are a lot of little games you can play which will break up the monotony. None seems to be much fun for more than 20 minutes.

Riding boredom can cause a hypnotizing effect that a motorcyclist can counteract by alertness. Good pilots, the aircraft type, continually sweep the horizon in a manner that is second nature to their flying. A glance at the instru-

