

# Sleeping and Other Bodily Reflexes on a Bike

IF YOU SPEND A FAIR AMOUNT OF TIME IN THE saddle of your motorcycle, you've inevitably had to learn how to handle riding while certain bodily functions take over, like sleep, for example. I remember my first sleepy scenario like it was

yesterday, even though it was a good 15 years ago. Back when the Hollister Rally in central California was experiencing a resurgence, I was cruising home by myself on my 1994 Dyna Low Rider. I had only been riding for four years, and this was my first time traveling long distance alone. Of course, I hadn't planned to fly solo on the trip back. My riding buddy hooked up with a guy she'd been flirting with all weekend. A sly grin and a wink from the burly biker was it all it took to convince my friend to accompany him and the boys on the ride back to Southern California (albeit in the back of the pack). "I'm fine. I'm a big girl. I'll have fun riding alone this first time," I thought to myself. I opted for the scenic route back, following Highway 33 that runs down the center of the Golden State.

It was a beautiful, sunny summer day. I was basking in the glow of the sun's reflection off the fields on either side of me. This was new territory for me. Before long, I noticed I was the only vehicle on this straight stretch of roadway. Could this be possible? It was California! For those few moments, I enjoyed the solitude. The next thing I remember, I was blinking my eyes, wondering how I got to where I was on the road — still upright and cruising straight ahead. It was maybe 50 yards, a half mile — could it be a whole mile? — where I had no recollection of the past few paces (whatever it measured out to be). It was then I realized I had dozed off. Dozed off! Fell asleep on my motorcycle! What the heck!? I'd never done that before. If you have any touring miles on your tires, I bet you've experienced this too. It happens! It happens in a car. It can happen on a motorcycle. Since that eye-awakening day, I've felt the urge to nod off other times on my motorcycle, mostly on warm sunny days where the drone of the engine is matched only by the drone of a straight road. But this won't happen again. I'll start singing to myself, unzip my jacket, and lift my face shield to let in the cold air. And



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then I'll stop and down some caffeine. Whatever it takes.

I performed another bodily function I don't wish on anybody riding a motorcycle 11 years ago. I was touring with my husband, each of us on separate motorcycles, on what would end up being a 14-day, 4,000-mile journey. On day two, I came down with a cold. Bam! Hit me out of nowhere. By day four, I was in full-on nose dribbling, sneezing, and

coughing mode. Mr. Mucus from Mucinex was holding a party in my sinus cavity with his Team Mucus buddies. I wear a three-quarter helmet with a face shield (my attempt at slowing the effects motorcycling has on an aging face). Coughing and sneezing and dealing with the large-and-in-charge nose dribbles ain't no fun with a face shield. So, I lifted the face shield. Now the wind on my face was splattering the dribbles down the sides of my cheek and into the corners of my mouth. Yuck! Hey, it happens. We're not all pictures of health on our motorcycle.

Then the sneezes came. Have you ever sneezed on your motorcycle? Yeah ... your eyes close shut for that split second. I'm told you can't sneeze with your eyes open. How about three sneezes in a row on your motorcycle? Now your eyes close three whole times. Makes for some tenuous riding while you hold on, straighten your back, focus your eyes, and then, ka-choo! Ka-choo! Ka-choo! Eyes wide shut. Great, you're still upright.

Again, if you wear a helmet like me, any helmet at one time or another, you've inevitably dealt with the head itch. You're riding along and your head starts to twitch dead center at the crown of your head. You're never going to reach it with a finger. So you grab hold of the edge of the helmet to move it from side to side, attempting to rub the helmet over the twitch. Doesn't quite do the trick, does it? My way of curing the creepy crawlies on my cranium is to will it to stop because the twitchy itch usually occurs when there's no place to pull over, and if I did, I'd have to tell my riding buddies, "I have to scratch an itch on my head." Yeah, that ain't flyin' over so well. Let me know what bodily reflexes you've experienced and how you handle them. Makes for some fun reading! **AIM**

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