

Medication Use and Safe Driving

Some prescription and over the counter medicines can interfere with your ability to drive safely.

This is because some medications may cause the following side effects:

- Sleepiness
- Slowed movements or response times
- Blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Confusion or cloudy thinking or difficulty remembering things
- Difficulty focusing or paying attention
- Fainting

Knowing how medications affect your ability to drive is important. For example, some medications are known to cause drowsiness. Drowsy driving can increase the risk of car accidents and possibly put you or others at risk of harm. Safe driving requires the driver to be aware that certain medications may impair their ability to drive.

Medications that require caution if driving

- Opioids such as codeine found in Tylenol® # 1, 2, 3, or 4 products, morphine, hydromorphone (Dilaudid®), oxycodone (OxyNeo®), fentanyl, methadone, meperidine and buprenorphine.
- Opioid-like drugs such as tramadol and tapentadol (Nucynta®)
- Benzodiazepines such as lorazepam (Ativan®), clonazepam, diazepam (Valium®) and alprazolam
- Sleeping pills such as zopiclone (Imovane®), zolpidem (Sublinox™) and trazodone
- Pain medications with antidepressant properties such as duloxetine, venlafaxine, amitriptyline and nortriptyline
- Pain medications with anti-seizure properties such as gabapentin, pregabalin (Lyrica®) and topiramate (Topamax®)
- Cannabinoid products such as nabilone (Cesamet®) and medical marijuana products that are inhaled, vapourized or consumed orally
- Muscle relaxants such as baclofen and cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril®)
- Ketamine

Questions to consider when assessing your ability to drive

- Have your loved ones noticed a change in your driving?
- Have you “zoned out” at a red light? Forgotten where you are going? Dozed off?
- Have you ever been slow to hit the brake due to pain or concentration problems?
- Have you had any “near misses”?
- Have there been times when you didn’t want to drive with your kids or grandkids in the car?

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Tips for medication use and safe driving

- Be extra cautious whenever starting new medications or when medication dose changes occur. In these situations, it is best to avoid driving until you have adjusted to your new medication or dose change.
- Tell your health care provider if you are experiencing any of the side effects that may make driving unsafe so that appropriate medication adjustments can be made.
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed.
- Do not abruptly stop medications without talking to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Be familiar with the side effects of your specific medications.

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