

Information on driving whilst taking certain medications

This leaflet summarises information and advice from the Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) regarding safety to drive, the potential problems of certain medications and your responsibility to stay safe on the roads. It also summarises recent changes in the law regarding driving on certain medications.

What are the legal implications?

In March 2015 the law changed regarding driving on certain medications. This law states that it is an offence to drive with certain drugs above specified levels in the body in the same way that it is an offence to drive with a certain level of alcohol in the blood.

If you are taking these medicines as directed by your doctor and your driving is not impaired then you are not breaking the law. The government wants to ensure that people can continue to drive on their medication providing that they are safe to do so.

If you feel that your driving may be impaired or your doctor has advised that you do not drive it is your responsibility to refrain from driving.

If your driving is impaired you are guilty of breaking the law and if you are involved in an accident you will not be able to defend your actions based on the fact that the medication is prescribed.

Which medications are included?

The medications that can affect the ability to drive safely include medications used to treat:

- Pain (Oramorph, Zomorph, Diamorphine, Oxycodone MR (Oxycontin, Longtec), Oxycodone IR (Oxynorm, Shortec), Fentanyl, Ketamine, Methadone).
- Anxiety or muscle relaxants (Diazepam, Clonazepam, Lorazepam).
- Sleeping tablets (Oxazepam, Temazepam).
- Multiple sclerosis (nabiximols).
- Drug addiction (methadone).
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder ADHD (amphetamines).

How will these medications affect me?

Medications affect people differently. The reason that your doctor has given you this leaflet is because the medication prescribed for you may affect your ability to drive safely due to its side effects. The medication may make you drowsy (sleepy), cause you to react slower than normal, and may impair your thinking.

Taking this medication will not automatically disqualify you from driving in the United Kingdom and will vary according to many factors such as the dose you have been prescribed, the other medications you are taking, whether you drink alcohol and how your body deals with drugs (metabolism).

If you take a number of the medications mentioned, however, it is likely that you will exceed the threshold over which driving is allowed. Please ask your doctor if this applies to you.

Advice on driving

Driving safely is the responsibility of the driver. You should not drive unless you feel completely competent to do so.

You should avoid driving for the first five days after starting or changing the dose of your medication.

There will be other times when you should not drive, including:

- If you feel drowsy, dizzy or unable to concentrate.
- If you have drunk alcohol.
- If your vision is blurred or impaired.
- If you have taken an additional dose of pain medication or relaxant within the last 3 hours.
- If you are also taking over the counter medications, such as hay fever tablets or sleeping remedies that may cause drowsiness.
- After taking strong drugs that have not been prescribed by your doctor, such as cannabis.

When can I start driving safely?

If you feel safe to drive, your medication is stable and your symptoms are well controlled we would recommend that you consider the following advice before attempting to drive:

- Ask your doctor whether they feel you are safe to drive.
- If your doctor feels that you are safe we would suggest that you start driving short and familiar journeys, on roads that you are used to and at a time when the traffic is not too busy, during daylight hours.
- You may also find that it is helpful to have an experienced driver with you in case you feel unable to complete the journey.

Do I need to inform my insurance company?

It is advisable to tell your motor insurance company about your current state of health, and what medication you are taking. Each insurance company has different requirements, but failure to inform them may risk invalidating your insurance.

Do I need to inform the DVLA?

You do not need to inform the DVLA that you are taking these medications. There may, however, be other information about your illness that the DVLA should know. Your doctor or the DVLA can give you more advice on this.

Drivers' Customer Services Correspondence Team,
DVLA
Swansea
SA6 7JL
Telephone: 03007906801
www.dvla.gov.uk

Key Messages

Do not drive on this medication until you know how it affects you. It is not against the law to drive whilst being on this medication as long as:

1. It is not affecting your ability to drive safely.
2. The medication has been prescribed to treat a medical problem.
3. Your doctor has advised that you are safe to drive on your medication.
4. You have taken the medication according to the instructions given to you by the doctor / prescriber.