



Royal Papworth Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Information on medications and driving

A patient's guide

What is the law?

The government has brought in new rules regarding driving if taking certain medications. The rules mean that it is an offence to drive (or attempt to drive, or be in charge of a vehicle) if the levels of these medications are above a certain limit in the body. This is to help the police tackle drug driving.

The police may perform a roadside saliva test to determine whether a person has any of these medications in their body. If this test is positive they may then go on to arrange further testing such as a blood test.

However, they are also aware that people can be prescribed these medications and taking them appropriately, but still have levels above these limits. If you are prescribed these medications, you are legally allowed to drive as long as you can show that:

- you have been prescribed them and followed advice on how to take them by a healthcare professional;
- They are not causing you to be unfit to drive even if you are above the specified limits.

Which medications are included?

The medications are:

- Opioids such as morphine, methadone (may also include others such as fentanyl, oxycodone);

- Benzodiazepines such as lorazepam, diazepam, clonazepam, temazepam, oxazepam and flunitrazepam;
- Ketamine;
- Amphetamines such as methylphenidate, dexamphetamine and selegiline.

Please be aware that medications have both a “generic” name and a “brand” name – for instance morphine comes as several different brands such as Oramorph, Morphgesic, Zomorph. If you are unsure whether you may be taking one of the medications listed above, please speak to your doctor or nurse. Local pharmacists should also be able to help.

What should I do?

You should continue to take your medication as prescribed. Check the leaflet that comes with the medication to see how it might affect your driving ability. Do not drive if you feel drowsy, dizzy, unable to concentrate or make decisions, or if you have blurred or double vision, or any other issue that impairs your ability to drive. Do not drive after taking your medications until you know how they affect you.

Medications are more likely to affect your driving ability if:

- You have just started taking them;
- The dose has been changed recently;

- You are taking other medications that can cause drowsiness (including medicines bought over the counter);
- You are taking breakthrough or rescue doses e.g. for pain or anxiety;
- You take any amount of alcohol (however small) as well as these medications.

It is advisable to ensure that the first time you drive after you start, or change one of these medications the journey should be short, familiar, during daylight and not at a time when there is a lot of traffic. If you are starting or changing the dose of opioid (morphine type) medications then you are advised not to drive for 5 days to allow the levels in your blood to stabilise. If you have taken an extra breakthrough or rescue dose then you shouldn't drive for at least 3 hours.

It is your responsibility to make sure your driving ability is not impaired.

It is advisable to carry evidence with you that you have been prescribed these medications, such as:

- A copy of the prescription;
- A copy of the specific advice given to you by a healthcare professional showing what the medication is, how much you take and when (this can be completed overleaf);

- The patient information leaflet (if bought over the counter).

If you are taking your medications as prescribed and your driving is not impaired then you are not breaking the law.

Do I need to tell the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)?

You do not need to tell the DVLA (though insurance companies may sometimes ask you to do so), but there may be other information about your illness that they should know and you should contact them to discuss.

Contact details: Drivers' Medical Enquiries, Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), Swansea SA99 ITU. Phone: 0300 790 6806. Online: www.dvla.gov.uk
You will need your driving licence number when you contact them.

Do I need to tell my car insurance company?

You should tell your car insurance company about your current illness and the medication you are taking. All companies are different, but it may invalidate your insurance if you do not tell them.

Please contact your healthcare professional if you have any further concerns regarding medications and driving.

