



Driving And Pain

Am I able to drive whilst taking medications prescribed for pain?

Yes, but only if your ability to drive is not impaired. Medications prescribed to help manage pain may cause side-effects such as dizziness or sleepiness and so may impair your driving.

It remains the responsibility of all drivers to decide whether they consider their driving is, or might be impaired on any given occasion. Do not drive if this is the case. Sometimes your doctor may advise you not to drive. If this is the case, even if you do not feel impaired, you must not drive as it is against the law to do so.

What symptoms may mean I cannot drive safely?

Do not drive if you experience symptoms that may impair your driving such as sleepiness, poor coordination, impaired or slow thinking, dizziness or visual problems. These symptoms can occur as side effects of medication, but be aware that pain itself can also affect sleep, concentration and impair physical function.

When might I be at risk of my driving being impaired?

This includes the following circumstances that may increase the risk of your driving being impaired:

- When first starting a new pain medication
- When increasing or reducing the dose of pain medication
- If another prescribed medication is added that could also impair your driving
- If you take an over the counter medicine that could also impair your driving
- If you have a pain condition that could physically impair your driving

Be aware that alcohol taken in combination with some pain medications can substantially increase the risk of accidents.

Do I need to inform my state motor vehicle department when I start a new medication?

You do not need to routinely inform your state motor vehicle department when you start medications for pain. However, there may be other information about your illness that your state motor vehicle department needs to know. Your doctor or your state motor vehicle department can advise you about this.

Do I need to inform my motor vehicle insurance company?

We would strongly advise you to inform your motor vehicle insurance company about your current state of health and what medication you are taking to ensure your motor insurance is valid.

The 'Drug Driving' law

If you have been prescribed one of the following medications you may be affected by this law: morphine or related drugs (such as codeine, tramadol or fentanyl), ketamine, clonazepam, diazepam, methadone, oxazepam, temazepam, lorazepam, flunitrazepam, amphetamine (e.g. dexamphetamine or selegiline), cannabinoids (e.g. sativex).

From 2015 there is a new offence of driving above a specified limit for these medications (like the current rules on alcohol and driving). If you are stopped and tested by the police you may test above the legal limit - depending on the dose you have been prescribed or the type of medicine. If however you are taking these medications in line with advice from a Doctor or Pharmacist and your driving is not impaired you may use a 'medical defence'.

If the police are satisfied that a driver is taking the relevant medicine on the advice of a healthcare professional, and your driving is not impaired, you should not be prosecuted. It may be useful for you to keep suitable evidence with you (such as a copy of your clinic letter and prescription) to show the police if you are ever stopped. However, if your doctor feels it is not safe for you to drive and you continue to do so, you will be breaking the law.

