



Pharmaceutical  
Society of Australia



# Medicines and driving

Some medicines can affect your ability to drive, cycle or use machinery. You need to be alert and able to respond quickly to changes in your environment when doing these tasks. Not everyone is affected to the same extent and different people are affected by medicines in different ways. The danger is you may not notice the effect a medicine has until it is too late. When starting a new medicine, always ask your pharmacist if it is safe to drive, cycle or use machinery and what warning signs to look for. If it is not safe, **DO NOT DRIVE OR OPERATE DANGEROUS MACHINERY.**

## Important

- If your medicine affects your driving, stop your driving, not your medicine, and talk to your doctor or pharmacist.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor if the medicine you are taking (prescription or non-prescription) may affect your driving. Some medicines may affect your driving only until your body gets used to them. Other medicines may affect your driving all the time you are taking them.
- Read ALL the labels on ALL medicines you take. Check with your pharmacist when your medicines have the following labels:

**This medicine may cause drowsiness and may increase the effects of alcohol.**

**If affected, do not drive a motor vehicle or use machinery.**

**OR**

**This medicine may affect mental alertness and/or coordination.**

**If affected, do not drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery.**



## Reactions to medicines

Medicines sometimes cause side effects and can reduce mental or physical abilities. For example, some medicines can cause:

- Drowsiness or tiredness
- Dizziness, light-headedness or faintness
- Confusion or poor concentration
- Shakiness, unsteadiness or anxiety
- Mood changes (e.g., angry or aggressive behaviour)
- Nausea, vomiting or other symptoms of illness
- Problems with vision or hearing
- Slow reaction time.

This can make it unsafe to drive, cycle or use machinery.

## Risks

If you drive when adversely affected by medicines you may cause an accident.

You risk:

- Killing, injuring or disabling other people or yourself
- Damaging property
- Losing your licence
- Losing your insurance cover.

The effect of a medicine on your driving may be greater:

- If you also drink alcohol
- If you take two (or more) medicines that have similar effects on your performance
- When you start using a new medicine
- If you take more than the prescribed dose of your medicine
- As you get older
- If you are tired.

## Medicines

Some prescription and non-prescription medicines used to treat the following conditions may affect your ability to drive, cycle or use machinery:

- Sleeping problems
- Epilepsy, convulsions
- Heart conditions
- High blood pressure
- Fluid retention
- Inflammation (e.g., arthritis)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Reflux, heartburn, indigestion
- Nervous system diseases
- Some infections
- Anxiety, depression – ‘nerves’
- Pain, headache
- Migraine
- Period pain
- Travel/morning sickness
- Coughs and colds
- Allergies, hay fever
- Stomach/duodenal ulcers
- Eye conditions
- Diabetes.

Methadone dosing can also reduce alertness and reaction times.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

## Self care

- If your medicine does affect you adversely, ask if there is an alternative. For example, some antihistamines for hayfever are less likely to make you drowsy than others.
- Ask your pharmacist for a list of all your medicines (e.g., MediList) and for information about their side effects.
- Use public transport, take a taxi or ask a friend to drive if you are taking medicines that could affect your driving.
- If you have missed a dose of your prescribed medicine, do not drive if your condition can make driving dangerous (e.g., epilepsy).
- Manage medical conditions by taking medicines correctly – if you have any problems talk to your pharmacist or doctor.
- If your medicine is affecting you adversely, do not drink alcohol. Ask a pharmacist or doctor for advice before mixing alcohol with your medicines.
- Do not drive when you are tired, particularly on longer trips.
- Do not use another person's medicine – it could have a different effect on you, possibly affecting your driving.

Most illegal drugs will affect your alertness or reaction times. Do not drive if you have used these substances.

## Alcohol

Even a small amount of alcohol, especially if combined with some medicines, can affect your driving skills.

Think of yourself, think of others – do not drive if you have been drinking alcohol.

## For more information

**A doctor** – listed under medical practitioners in the yellow pages or the phone book.

**Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)** leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

**NPS Medicines Line** – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

**The Poisons Information Centre** – in case of poisoning phone 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask a pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.