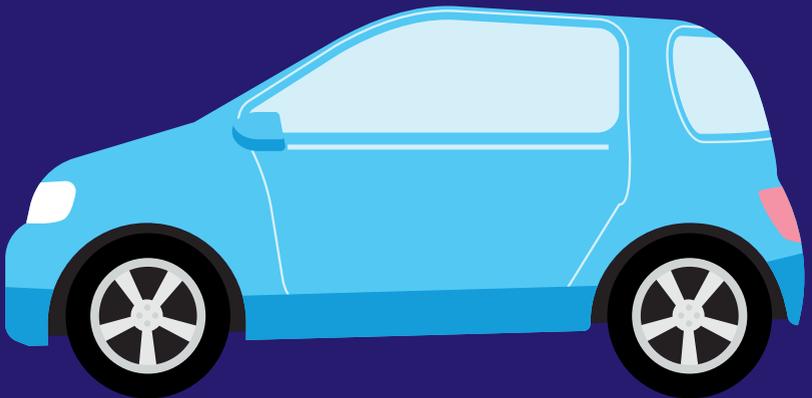


Painkillers and driving

Information and advice for patients who are
taking strong painkillers and also wish to drive



Introduction

This leaflet gives information and advice to patients who are taking strong painkillers and also wish to drive. Strong painkillers can affect each person in a different way. They may cause some drowsiness which can slow your reaction time. These effects can be made worse if you are also taking other medicines that can cause drowsiness (e.g. some medicines used to treat hay fever, depression or to prevent fits) or if taken with alcohol. If you are taking strong painkillers then it is important that you follow the below guidance.

Only drive

- ✓ If you feel 100% safe to do so.
- ✓ When there is no doubt in your ability. It is your legal responsibility to consider whether or not your driving is, or may be, impaired.

IF IN DOUBT, DO NOT DRIVE

Do not drive

- ✗ If you have symptoms that might impact your driving, such as poor concentration, slowness of thinking, sleepiness or poor coordination.
- ✗ For at least five days when first starting to take strong painkillers, or changing the dose. Sometimes it can take longer than five days for sleepiness or other impairment to wear off.
- ✗ After taking extra short-acting or immediate-release doses of strong painkillers. For example, for at least three hours after an extra dose.

The law on driving when taking painkillers

A law effective from March 2015 specifies limits for some drugs when driving. To be over these limits is an offence, similar to drink driving. The list of drugs includes certain medicines that are used to treat pain (e.g. morphine) or anxiety (e.g. diazepam and lorazepam). The principle target for this offence is dangerous drivers who are impaired after recreational use of drugs (i.e. used illegally or abused). While you are taking your medicines for medical reasons, you should still be aware that they could affect your ability to drive. If you are driving with any of the medicines over the specified limit in your body, you will not be breaking the law providing you are:

- Able to provide proof that you have been prescribed these medicines.
- Taking them according to the advice of your prescriber or the medicine leaflet.
- Not impaired and driving safely.

Suitable proof that you are taking the medicines as prescribed could include a copy of your prescription, the leaflet from the medicine packet or a letter from a healthcare professional. You may wish to carry such proof when driving.

For further information visit www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law

Restarting driving

When you feel 100% safe to drive, begin by making a short trip on roads that are quiet and familiar, preferably in daylight. You might find it helpful to drive with someone who could take over driving if required.

What about insurance and the DVLA?

You should inform your insurance company of your illness and the medicines you are taking to check that you still have insurance cover. You may not need to inform the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) but insurance companies generally advise this. If in doubt, discuss with your doctor or the DVLA medical advisory helpline (0300 790 6806).



References

DVLA medical advisory helpline
0300 790 6806

Drugs and driving: the law
www.gov.uk/drug-driving-law

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