

Medication and Driving



The law and driving

If your ability to drive safely is impaired by any cause, including medication or alcohol, you are breaking the law if you drive.

You should not drive if you feel drowsy, dizzy, unable to concentrate or make decisions, or if you have blurred or double vision.

From March 2015 you are breaking the law if you drive with certain drugs above specified levels in the body, whether your driving is impaired or not. However, if you have been prescribed these medicines, and are taking them as directed, and your driving is not impaired, then you are not breaking the law.

The list of drugs includes many that are used regularly by

patients being cared for by the Palliative Care Team eg.

- Strong painkillers (eg. Morphine, MST, Fentanyl, Oxycodone).
- Anxiety or sleeping tablets (e.g. Diazepam, Lorazepam, Temazepam).



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What will happen if I'm stopped by the police?

The police may use a roadside test to see if you have taken any of the drugs. If the test detects these, the type and level of the drugs in your body can be confirmed by a blood test taken at the police station. The law provides you with a 'medical defence'.

This states that you are not guilty if:

- The medicine was prescribed, supplied, or sold to you to treat a medical problem.

AND

- You took the medicine according to the instructions given by the prescriber or the information provided with the medicine.

How medication affects people

Many people on a stable dose of strong painkillers find their driving is not impaired, but this may not be the case, especially when changes are made. Some people feel drowsy with slower reactions than usual. This effect may be more significant if other medicines or alcohol are taken at the same time.

Other drugs may also affect your ability to drive; please see the leaflet with your medications to check this.

Advice on driving whilst taking strong painkillers:

- You should not drive for five days after starting or changing the dose of your strong painkiller. Sometimes longer is needed.
- You must not drive if you feel sleepy, dizzy or unable to concentrate.
- You must not drive after drinking alcohol or taking strong drugs which have

not been prescribed or recommended by your doctor, e.g. cannabis.

- You must not drive if you start taking other drugs that cause sleepiness, either prescribed by your doctor or bought from the chemist, e.g. hay fever medicine, sleeping tablets.
- You must not drive on days when you have taken extra (breakthrough or rescue) doses of strong painkiller, e.g. Oramorph, OxyNorm.

Restarting driving

If after five days you are not sleepy or impaired in any other way, you may start driving.

Make your first trip:

- Short.
- On roads that you are familiar with.
- At a time when the traffic is not too busy.

You may find it helpful to have an experienced driver accompanying you to begin with in case you find that you are unable to complete your journey.





Car insurance

We would advise you to inform your motor insurance company about your current state of health and what medication you are taking. Each insurance company is different. It is best to discuss your circumstances with your insurance company to ensure that you are covered.

A member of the Specialist Palliative Care Team or your GP will be happy to help you decide when it is safe to drive. If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please do not hesitate to ask.

Drivers Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

You do not need to inform the DVLA that you are starting a strong painkiller. However, there may be other information about your illness that the DVLA needs to know. Your doctors or the DVLA can advise you about this.

How to contact the DVLA

For drivers' medical enquires

Tel: 0300 790 6806

You will need to have your driving licence number available.

Website: www.dvla.gov.uk

**Address: Drivers and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)
SWANSEA SA99 1TU**

If you require this information in an alternative format please call 01803 210800