

Fit to drive



MEDICATION AND DRIVING

THE FACTS: MEDICATION AND DRIVING

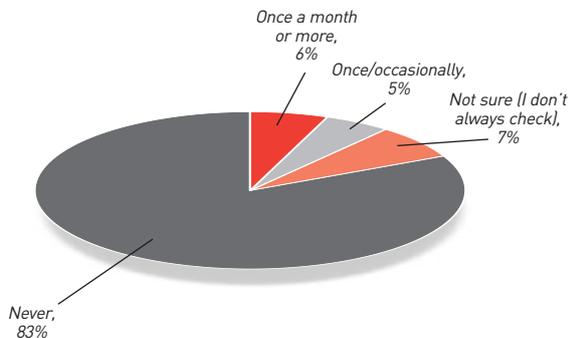
- Many prescription and over-the-counter medications can impair your ability to drive safely, for instance by causing drowsiness or affecting reaction times, coordination, concentration or vision. These include some cough and cold medicines, anti-inflammatories, anti-histamines, antibiotics, antidepressants, epilepsy drugs and sleeping pills.¹
- A study by the Transport Research Laboratory found that 5.2% of drivers and 4.1% of motorcyclists killed in road crashes had traces of medicinal drugs that could have affected their driving.²
- It is illegal to drive if you are unfit to do so because you are on legal or illegal drugs. As part of a new drug driving law set to come into force in autumn 2014, the government is introducing recommended limits for a number of prescription drugs for the first time, making it easier for courts to prove someone was unfit to drive because of medication.³

Q1: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven after taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication which recommends you don't drive?

A significant minority of drivers admit to being worryingly complacent about the potentially dangerous effects of medication on driving, with one in six (17%) either ignoring the warnings on labels or not checking them. This has risen from one in eight (12%) in 2010.

- 6% said they did so once a month or more
- 5% said once or occasionally
- 7% said they were unsure, as they don't always check the recommendations
- 83% said never

Figure 1: In the past 12 months, how often have you driven after taking prescribed or over-the-counter medication which recommends you don't drive?



Q2: Which of the over-the-counter medications below do you think affect your ability to drive safely?

All of the below medications can potentially impair your ability to drive. However, the survey reveals a shocking level of unawareness of their adverse effects. Almost one in 10 (9%) think none of these medications can impair driving; three in 10 (30% and 31%) are unaware that hayfever medications and painkillers can do so; a huge four in five (81%) are unaware that heartburn and indigestion medications can also do so. Women showed a higher level of awareness than men.

- 70% said some hayfever and allergy medications (61% men, 77% women)
- 47% said some decongestants (41% men, 51% women)
- 69% said some painkillers (65% men, 71% women)
- 25% said some diet pills (21% men, 27% women)
- 60% said some cough medicines (56% men, 63% women)
- 47% said some travel sickness medications (42% men, 51% women)
- 19% said some heartburn and indigestion medications (19% men, 20% women)
- 9% said none of the above (11% men, 7% women)

ADVICE FOR DRIVERS

- When taking any medication you should always check the label to see if it will affect your ability to drive. If you are unsure, consult your doctor or pharmacist. Never drive if a label or health professional says that you may be affected. Even if you have not been given this advice, don't drive if you feel the product is affecting you.
- If your medication affects your driving, stop driving, not your medication – make arrangements for alternative transport, or seek alternative, safe medication if you have to drive.



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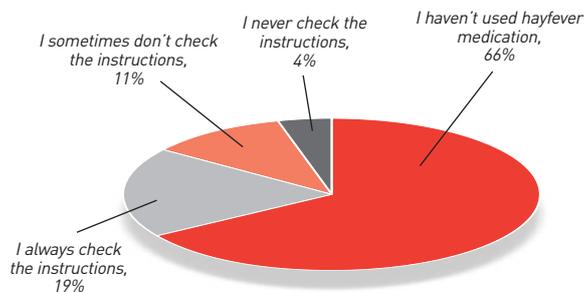


Q3: If you have used hayfever medication in the last 12 months, have you always checked the instructions to make sure it won't affect your driving?

Many hayfever medications impair your ability to drive safely, yet almost half (44%) of drivers who use hayfever medication admit sometimes or never checking the instructions to see whether it could affect their driving.

- 66% said they haven't used hayfever medication
- 19% said they always check the instructions – this is 56% of those who use hayfever medication
- 11% said they sometimes don't check the instructions – this is 32% of those who use hayfever medication
- 4% said they never check the instructions – this is 12% of those who use hayfever medication

Figure 2: If you have used hayfever medication in the last 12 months, have you always checked the instructions to make sure it won't affect your driving?



End notes

1. State of the road: medication and driving, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland, 2011
2. The incidence of drugs and alcohol in road accident fatalities, Transport Research Laboratory, 2000
3. Public approval for driving limits for 16 drugs, Department for Transport, 2014 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/public-approval-for-driving-limits-for-16-drugs>