



## What is the law?

It is an offence to drive or attempt to drive a vehicle while under the influence of an 'intoxicant' to the point that you cannot keep proper control over the vehicle. An 'intoxicant' includes alcohol, illegal drugs, and medicine, and any combination of drugs or combination of drugs and alcohol.

## Drug driving and the law

**In Ireland, we have a twin-track approach to drug driving:**

**It is against the law to:**

- 1) drive under the influence of drugs (including prescribed drugs) where your driving is impaired to such an extent that you don't have proper control of the vehicle;
- 2) drive under the influence of certain drugs (regardless of driving performance) above specified levels. There are currently three drugs specified – cannabis, cocaine and heroin.

If you are found to have any of these drugs above the specified limits, you can be prosecuted for drug driving with no proof of impairment necessary. This is the same as the law where a driver exceeds specified alcohol levels.

## New 'preliminary' drug test

In April 2017, Gardaí were given new powers to conduct 'Preliminary Drug Testing' at the roadside or in Garda stations. This allows the Gardaí to establish checkpoints for testing drivers for drugs with similar powers to existing alcohol testing checkpoints. This system will allow Gardaí to test a driver's saliva for cannabis, cocaine, opiates (for example, heroin, morphine) and benzodiazepines (for example, Valium).

Drivers with medical conditions should continue to take their prescribed medications in accordance with healthcare advice and medical fitness-to-drive guidelines, which can be viewed at <http://www.rsa.ie/RSA/Licensed-Drivers/Safe-driving/Medical-Issues/>

But be aware of how the drugs you are taking might affect your ability to drive.

So, if you are taking prescription or over-the-counter medicines under the advice of your doctor or pharmacist, **and so long as those medicines don't impair your driving**, you have nothing to be concerned about.

If you are in any doubt, speak to your doctor or pharmacist about your concerns.

A statutory medical exemption certificate is provided for in the law for people who have been prescribed medicinal cannabinoids (medicinal marijuana) in Ireland. If this applies to you, you should carry the medical certificate with you while driving.



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Road Safety Authority

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RSA

# Medicines and driving

Údarás Um Shábháilteacht Ar Bhóithre  
Road Safety Authority

## Medicines and Driving

Taking medication can both increase or reduce your ability to drive safely.

Taking your medication as advised by your doctor can make driving safer and more comfortable in many medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, arthritis, depression and attention-deficit and hyperactivity disorder. It is important to take your medication as instructed by your doctor. It is also important not to stop taking your medication without advice, as unsupervised withdrawal of some medications (such as sleeping tablets and medications for anxiety) may also affect your driving ability.

However, some medicines can have negative effects, and this leaflet aims to tell you what those medications are and what the effects can be. Medications that can have negative effects include:

- Medicines that are prescribed by your doctor
- Non-prescription medicines from your pharmacy (often called 'over-the-counter' medicines)
- Herbal medicines or supplements

**If you take more than one medicine, or take any of them with alcohol, the harmful effects may be increased.**



**It is an offence to drive while affected by medicines that reduce your ability to drive safely.**

### What medicines affect driving?

The following medicines have side-effects that may reduce your driving ability.

- Sleeping tablets
- Anti-depressants
- Sedatives, tranquilisers or other medicines for anxiety
- Some pain killers
- Some allergy or hay fever medicines

- Many cough and cold remedies (can cause drowsiness or poor co-ordination)
- Some anti-nausea medicines
- Some medicines for epilepsy
- Some medicines for high blood pressure or heart conditions
- Some medicines for diabetes

**This list is not complete.** You should check with your doctor or pharmacist to find out if **your** particular medicines risk affecting **your** ability to drive safely.



**Medicines can affect different people in different ways, so it is really important to talk to your doctor or pharmacist about driving while using the medicine.**

You may need to take extra care when starting on some medicines. Your doctor or pharmacist may advise you not to drive at all until you see how the medication is affecting **you**.

### In what way can these medicines affect my driving?

Some medicines can make you feel sleepy, dizzy, or less alert or can affect your co-ordination. As a result, your judgement and your driving skills can be affected. If you have **any** of the following effects from your medication, your ability to drive safely may be reduced and you may be driving 'under the influence' of drugs.

- Sleepiness or feeling drowsy
- Slower reaction times
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness or feeling light-headed
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Poor co-ordination
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Feeling anxious, tense or aggressive

### How do I make sure I drive safely?

#### Follow instructions

Always follow the instructions your doctor or pharmacist gives you.

Always read the label and information leaflet with the medicine. If there's anything you don't understand, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

#### Check with your pharmacist

If a medicine is prescribed by your doctor, always ask the doctor or pharmacist if the medicine will affect your driving. If it does, ask if you can take a different medicine instead.

If you are getting non-prescription medicines from a pharmacy, check with the pharmacist if the medicine affects driving. Be sure to tell them if you are taking other medicines, and ask if it is safe to drive when taking that combination.

#### Check your medicine

Always check if drinking alcohol could affect how the medicine works. Taking alcohol along with 'impairing medicines' is dangerous and could lead to greater impairment. 'Impairing medicines' are those that can have side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, reduced co-ordination, impaired judgement and so on.



Remember that you may not always be aware if your medicine is affecting your ability to drive safely. Tell-tale signs include near misses, hitting the kerb, or having difficulty performing tasks that are normally easy for you to do. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medicine and the potential risk.



Never take medicines prescribed or recommended for someone else.



If you feel unwell or think your medicine may be affecting your ability to drive safely, **don't risk it – don't drive.**