

Are you safe to drive? Information for drivers taking medicines



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Many substances cause effects that may make you unsafe to drive. These include prescribed medicines, medicines you buy without a prescription, herbal products, alcohol and other recreational drugs. **Combining these increases your chances of having a crash.**

Taking the following increases your chance of dying in a crash while driving:

Medicines that make
you sleepy

5x



Alcohol*

8x



Medicines that make
you sleepy with illegal
drugs

19x



Medicines that make
you sleepy or illegal
drugs with alcohol

32x



*10 mg to 50 mg in 100 mL of blood. NZ legal limit for people 20 years old and over is 50 mg in 100 mL of blood. The risk gets higher with a higher amount of alcohol.

Medicines for the following health conditions may make you unsafe to drive:

- » Pain
- » Depression, anxiety or other mental health conditions
- » Heart or blood pressure problems
- » Allergies (antihistamines)
- » Sleep
- » Epilepsy (seizures)
- » Nausea or vomiting

Check for any of these symptoms:

- » Feeling drowsy, sleepy, dizzy or weak
- » Slowed reactions
- » Confused or unable to focus
- » Blurred vision
- » Trouble speaking or slurred speech
- » Headache
- » Feeling 'wired'

Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse about all the medicines or substances you are taking, so they can help you stay safe on the road.

Ask them how long the effects last.

Some medicines taken at night may affect you the next morning.

Check if it is okay to drink alcohol while you are taking the medicine.

It is important to check how you're feeling before you drive, especially if you have:

- » just started a new medicine
- » increased your dose

You need to make sure you feel safe to drive, **before you get in the car.**

Hels, T. et al. (2011). Risk of injury by driving with alcohol and other drugs. Project No. TREN-05-FP6TR-S07.61320-518404-DRUID