

DON'T BECOME A VICTIM

John takes his first dose of the medication, Elavil, prescribed by his doctor to help him deal with his recent state of depression. While driving to a friend's house he falls asleep and drives off the road into a line of trees. Mary takes Dimetapp Elixir to fight off her annual summer allergies just before having two cocktails with dinner. It is raining when she drives to meet her boyfriend and her induced state of unsteadiness, combined with difficult driving conditions, makes it impossible for her to manipulate a sharp curve in the road.

The probability of being involved in a motor-vehicle injury crash during a 75 year lifetime is approximately 84 percent. In 1997, 1,630 people were killed, and 280,871 were injured in motor vehicle crashes on New York State roads.

The above anecdotes illustrate how medications, either prescribed or over-the-counter, can lead to a crash. The possibility of a crash is even greater when medications are taken in combination with alcohol. The possible drug interaction could prove to be deadly.

It is imperative that motorists remain alert, with complete use of their faculties, whenever they get behind the wheel of a car.

ALWAYS CONSULT YOUR PHYSICIAN OR PHARMACIST

- If you are taking a prescribed medication, ask your doctor and/or pharmacist if said medication can affect alertness or driving skills.

- If a medication is known to cause dizziness or drowsiness, the patient should take a few doses in a safe environment to determine any effect the drug may have on their body.

Exactly What are Drug Interactions?

When one or more drugs are taken in combination with other medications, alcohol or certain foods, the intended effect of the medication may be altered. When a new drug is recommended to treat an illness, the patient should always advise the prescribing doctor if they regularly take other medications (**including prescriptions, over-the-counter, or herbal**). Failure to communicate a medication may result in an adverse drug interaction that may vary from a simple blocking of a drug's beneficial effects, to a serious reaction between two drugs that may be life-threatening. If **four or more** medications are taken at one time, drug interactions are no longer predictable.

- If you experience any adverse effects, consult with your physician or pharmacist immediately to determine if the dosage can be reduced or the medication altered.

Because individual reactions to new medications vary greatly, it would be prudent to give the body a few days to adjust to the medication. This precaution may prevent the adverse drug reactions that can interfere with motor skills.

Frequently Used Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications Whose Known Side Effects May Impair Driving Ability or Safety

Some common side effects associated with prescription, over-the-counter drugs and some herbal medications are dizziness, blurred vision and drowsiness. Check with your physician or pharmacist to determine which side effects are related to your particular medications.

~ ANTICONVULSANT / ANTI-EPILEPTIC MEDICATIONS

- Dilantin (Phenytoin); Klonopin (clonazepam); Neurontin (gabapentin); Phenobarbital; Tegretol (carbamazepine); Topamax (topiramate).

~ ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS

- Asendin (amoxapine); Buspar (buspirone); Celexa; Desyrel (trazodone); Elavil (amitriptyline); Norpramin (desipramine); Pamelor (nortriptyline); Paxil (paroxetine); Prozac (fluoxetine); Serzone (nefazodone); Sinequan (doxepin); Tofranil (imipramine pamoate); Zoloft (sertraline).

~ ANTIHISTAMINE MEDICATIONS

- Actifed (triprolidine); Antivert (meclizine); Benadryl (diphenhydramine); Chlor-Trimeton (chlorpheniramine maleate); Dimetapp; Tavist; Zyrtec (cetirizine).

~ ANTINAUSEA / ANTIEMETICS & GASTROINTESTINAL MEDICATIONS

- Antivert (medicine); Compazine (prochlorperazine); Donnatal (contains phenobarbital and atropine and the elixir also contains alcohol); Dramamine(dimenhydrinate); Librax or Librium (chlordiazepoxide); Lomotil (diphenoxylate & atropine); Reglan (metoclopramide); Tigan (trimethobenzamide); Vistaril (hydroxyzine).

~ ANTIPARKINSON MEDICATIONS

- Artane (trihexphenidyl HCL; Cogentin (benztropine mesylate); Parlodel (bromocriptine mesylate); Permax (pergolide mesylate); Sinemet (carbidopa-levodopa); Symmetrel (amantadine).

~ ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS

- Clozaril (clozapine); Haldol (decanoate); Mellaril; Navane (thiothixene); Thorazine (chlorpromazine).

~ COLD, COUGH, ALLERGY & ASTHMA MEDICATIONS

- Actifed; Atarax (hydroxyzine hcl); Atrovent (ipratropium bromide); Benadryl (diphenhydramine); Chlortrimeton; Dimetane Decongestant Elixir; Dimetapp / Dimetapp Elixir; Phenergan / Phenergan DM Syrup / Phenergan VC Syrup; Robitussin Maximum Strength Cough and Cold Liquid; Tuss-Ornade Liquid.

All Cough and Cold Preparations that contain ALCOHOL: all Cough and Cold Preparations that contain CODEINE.

~ DIABETIC MEDICATIONS

- DiaBeta / Micronase / Glynase (glyburide).

~ EYEDROPS / OPHTHALMIC MEDICATIONS

- Alphagan (brimonidine tartrate ophthalmic soln.); Xalatan.

Several eye-drops, such as Pilocarpine, which are used to treat glaucoma, can impair night vision. Always check with your eye doctor to determine whether or not your eye medication may have a similar effect.

~ HEART AND BLOOD PRESSURE MEDICATIONS

- Aldomet (methyldopa); Apresoline (hyralazine); Cardura (doxazosin); Catapres (clonidine); Inderal (propranolol); Lopressor (metoprolol tartrate); Nitrostat / Nitro Dur (nitroglycerin); Normodine (labetalol); Procardia or Procardia XL (nifedipine).

~ MUSCLE RELAXANT MEDICATIONS

- Flexeril (cyclobenzaprine); Lioresal (baclofen); Soma (carisoprodol); / Soma Compound (carisoprodol and aspirin); Valium (diazepam).

~ PAINKILLERS & ANTIARTHRITIC MEDICATIONS

• Darvon / Darvocet-N (ropoxyphene); Codeine; Daypro (oxaprozin); Fiorinal / Fioricet (butalbital); Indocin (indomethacin); Motrin / Advil (ibuprofen); Aleve / Anaprox / Naprosyn (naproxen); Relafan (nabumetone); OxyContin / Percocet / Percodan (oxycodone); Ultram (tramadol); Vicodin / Lortab (hydrocodone bitartrate); Voltaren (diclofenac).

Please Note: *Anyone who has been prescribed an opioid painkiller such as codeine, or one of its derivatives--Duragesic, Tylenol with codeine, MS-Contin OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, or Vicodin--should be aware that these medications are much more likely to have side effects which can impair alertness and driving ability. It is important that other drugs such as alcohol, antihistamines, tranquilizers, muscle relaxants, or anything that depresses the central nervous system, not be taken with codeine as they all enhance the sedative effect of codeine.*

☺ Be certain that you understand all instructions before starting a medication, including when to take it, with what, how long, and what to do if a problem occurs.

☺ Avoid operating a motor vehicle or walking lengthy distances for the first few days after a new drug is taken in order to give your body time to adjust to the medication.

☺ Read all labels on over-the-counter medications to determine if they may effect alertness, motor or driving ability.

☺ Use car services, taxis, or alternate means of transportation if you know that an adverse drug reaction is present, or postpone driving yourself until side effects have subsided.

☺ Consider asking another motorist to drive you to a treatment site if you are receiving chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

☺ Keep a permanent record with you of all drugs and vaccines that you know you are sensitive or allergic to.

☺ Call your doctor or pharmacist if you feel you are having any adverse reaction or side effects from any medications.

DON'T drink alcohol and drive.

☹ Don't mix alcohol with prescribed or over-the-counter medications unless your doctor says it is okay. Although not all drugs react adversely with alcohol, many do. It is particularly dangerous, and in many cases illegal, to combine alcohol and drugs while driving.

☹ Don't drive if medication causes drowsiness or dizziness.

☹ Don't take drugs prescribed for someone else. They may effect you adversely.

Operating a Motor Vehicle While Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs

In New York state, you may be arrested for driving while intoxicated (DWI), i.e., driving with a blood alcohol content of .10 percent or more (.10 BAC). This is punishable by a fine of \$500-\$1000, or by imprisonment for not more than one year, or both fine and imprisonment and a mandatory license suspension of 6-months. In New York City, and some New York state counties, an arrest for a DWI offense may also result in the seizure of your vehicle.

Driving while ability impaired by a drug (DWAI-drug), or driving while ability impaired by alcohol (DWAI), i.e., driving with a BAC of .06 to .09, is punishable by a fine of \$300-\$500, or by imprisonment for not more than 15 days, or both, and a mandatory license suspension of 90 days.

Acknowledgments

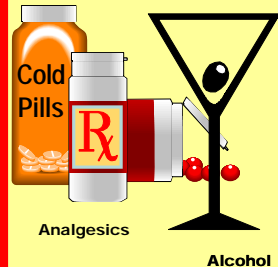
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How Medications and Alcohol Affect Driving Skills



Antidepressants

~ TRANQUILIZERS, SLEEPING PILLS & ANXIOLYTIC MEDICATIONS

• Ambien (zolpidem tartrate); Ativan (lorazepam); Dalmane (flurazepam); Halcion (triazolam); Klonopin (clonazepam); Librium (chlordiazepoxide); Restoril (temazepam); Serax (oxazepam); Tranxene (clorazepate dipotassium); Valium (diazepam); Xanax (alprazolam).

The following guidelines are suggested if you must drive while taking medication:

DO Tell your doctors about all the prescribed, over-the-counter, or herbal medicines you are taking and about any reactions or sensitivities you may have to any drugs.

☺ Ask your doctor or pharmacist about known side effects of prescribed medications including those that effect alertness, motor or driving skills.