

Information on driving whilst taking strong opioids

This leaflet supplements information given in the Patient Information Leaflet Using Strong Opioids to Manage Pain. (You may also refer to any patient information sheet provided by the medicine manufacturer).

Q1. What are strong opioids?

A. There are a number of strong opioids available. Strong opioids commonly prescribed by doctors include: Oramorph, MST, Oxynorm, Fentanyl, Oxycontin and Sevredol.

Q2. How will strong opioids affect me?

A. Opioids can affect each person in a different way. They may make you drowsy (sleepy) which can cause you to react slower than usual. These effects can be made worse if you are also taking other medicines that can cause drowsiness. Drinking alcohol whilst taking strong opioids can also make you more drowsy.

Q3. What is the advice on driving whilst taking strong opioids?

A. You should not drive for at least five days when you first start taking strong opioids, or if you are changing the dose of strong opioids. Sometimes longer is needed.

There will be other times when you must not drive, these include:

- If you feel drowsy
- If you have drunk any alcohol
- If you have taken extra doses of strong opioids for pain – we would recommend that you do not drive the same day as taking an extra short acting strong opioid, for example Oramorph, Oxynorm or Sevredol.
- If you start taking other drugs prescribed by your doctor or bought from a chemist that may cause drowsiness, for example some hay fever medicines
- After taking strong drugs which have not been prescribed by your doctor, for example cannabis
- Anything that makes you less able to make a sudden emergency stop with your vehicle

Q4. When can I start driving?

A. If you are not drowsy after you have been taking your strong opioids for five days you can start driving again. Your first trip should be:

1. Short
2. On roads you are used to
3. At a time when the traffic is not too busy
4. During daylight - when there is good visibility

You may also find it helps to have an experienced driver with you to begin with in case you cannot finish your journey.

Q5. Do I need to inform the Drivers Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) if I am taking strong opioids?

A. No, you do not need to inform the DVLA that you are taking strong opioids. However, there may be other information about your illness that the DVLA should know. Your doctor and the DVLA can give you more advice about this.

Contact details for the DVLA are: DVLA Swansea SA99 1TU. Tel No: 0300 790 6806

<http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/driver-and-vehicle-licensing-agency>

You will need to know your driving licence number when you contact them.

Q6. Do I need to inform my car insurance company if I am taking strong opioids?

A. You should tell your motor insurance company about your current state of health and what medication you are taking. Each insurance company is different, but your insurance may not be valid if you do not do this.

Q7. What are the legal implications of driving whilst taking strong opioids?

A. The Crime and Courts Act 2013 includes an offence of driving, attempting to drive or being in charge of a vehicle, with a specified 'controlled' drug (which includes strong opioids) in the body above a specified level. The principle target for this offence is dangerous drivers who are impaired after recreational use of drugs, ie used illegally or abused.

You are taking strong opioids for medical reasons, but should still be aware that the medicine can affect the ability to drive.

Legally, therefore, do not drive while taking this medicine until you know how it affects you. It is essential that you do not drive unless you feel 100% safe to do so. It is not against the law to drive whilst being on a strong opioid as long as:-

- The medicine has been prescribed to treat a medical problem (it is therefore worthwhile carrying a copy of your prescription and/or the original box/packaging with you, so that traffic police can verify your prescription)
- You have taken it according to the instructions given by your prescriber or the information provided with the medication
- It was not affecting your ability to drive safely.

Sources of Information:

Drug driving: guidance for healthcare professionals July 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drug-driving-and-medicine-advice-for-healthcare-professionals>

Analgesic drugs and fitness to drive. Palliative Care Formulary 6th Edition
palliativedrugs.com 2014

Information in driving whilst taking strong painkillers

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/documents/814/Opioids%20and%20driving%20ABUHB.pdf>

Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please ask if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format.
Please contact: 01895 279973

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audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient
information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973 查詢。

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