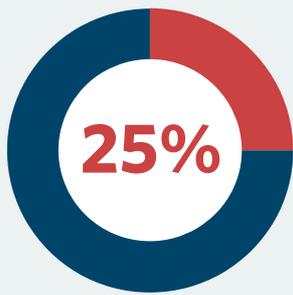


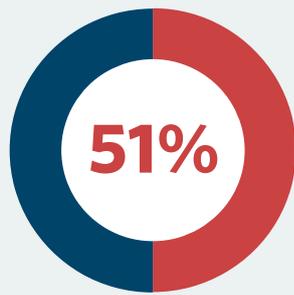
IS MY PATIENT SAFE TO DRIVE?



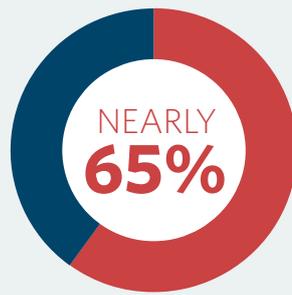
SUBSTANCE IMPAIRED DRIVING IS A SIZEABLE AND SERIOUS PROBLEM



OF ALL SCRIPTS ARE FOR MEDICATION THAT CAN IMPAIR DRIVING.³



OF DRIVERS DON'T RECALL BEING WARNED ABOUT POTENTIAL IMPAIRMENT.²



OF DRIVERS ARE NOT AWARE IT'S ILLEGAL TO DRIVE WHILE IMPAIRED BY MEDICATION.²



1 in 3 people killed on New Zealand roads has medication or drugs in their system that may impair driving.⁴



2 in 3 drivers used medication that may impair driving in the last 12 months.²



1 in 7 drivers report taking medication or drugs they felt could have affected their ability to drive safely in the past year.²

Road crashes caused by substance impaired driving, occur much more often in New Zealand than previously thought. People are uninformed about how medication and drugs can affect their driving.

As a health practitioner, you can help your patients to be informed about how their medication – and other substances they may be taking – can affect their driving. You can help them make good choices about whether or not they're safe to drive.

What is substance impaired driving?

Substance impaired driving is when a person's ability to drive a car is affected because they have taken a drug or medication, a combination of these or combined them with alcohol. It's illegal to drive while impaired and NZ Police will enforce this law.

References:

1. Guohua Li, et al (2013) *Drug use and fatal motor vehicle crashes: a case-control study.*
2. NZ Transport Agency (2015). For NZTA Substance Impaired Driving Project. *Memo: Baseline Driver Survey.*
3. NZ Transport Agency (2015). For NZTA Substance Impaired Driving Project. *Memo: Analysis of summary data from the pharmaceutical collection year to July 2014.*
4. Poulsen, Helen (2010) *Alcohol and other drug use in New Zealand drivers 2004 to 2009.*

HAVE THE 'SAFE TO DRIVE' CONVERSATION WITH YOUR PATIENTS.

Give your affected patients a copy of the 'Are you safe to drive?' leaflet, tick their medication and possible symptoms and discuss the following:



- Let your patients know **if their medication could affect their driving.**
- Make sure they **check for symptoms** each time they drive.
- Advise **how long** the effects of their medication may last.
- Tell them whether they should avoid **alcohol** while taking their medication as it may multiply the risk.
- Advise them **not to stop taking their medication** so they can drive.
- Talk about the **options**, such as trying a different medication or dose, or taking their medication at a different time.

You might also want to raise one of these:

- The **decision to drive** is their responsibility.
- **Reaction times** are really slowed when they're impaired.
- 'Impairment' **may only be temporary.**
- **Other drugs** like cannabis or over-the-counter medication may affect their driving.
- Car **insurance** may be affected if they drive impaired when they've been told not to drive on strong medication.
- Discuss **alternatives to driving** such as taking the bus or getting a lift. Talk about how long they may have to do this.
- Consider the **effects when they change their routine** – such as evening activity or a very early start.
- Make a plan for **emergency night-time driving.**

Five types of medication most often prescribed by New Zealand doctors make up three-quarters of those that may impair driving.

- **Analgesics**
- **Antidepressants**
- **Heart medications beta blockers/calcium channel blockers**
- **Antihistamines**
- **Sedatives.**

Five less common prescription medications make up most of the rest.

- **Antipsychotics**
- **Anti-epilepsy drugs**
- **Substance dependence treatments**
- **Anti-nausea medication**
- **Anxiolytics.**

These 10 account for over 95 percent of prescription medications that may impair driving in New Zealand. Talk to your patient about how their driving could be affected if they're:

- taking one or more of these medications, or
- taking some of the variants sold as 'pharmacy only', or
- taking over-the-counter medication such as antihistamines or cold and flu preparations.



1 IN 3 DRIVERS KNOWS NONE OR ONLY ONE OF THE SIGNS OF IMPAIRED DRIVING²

Some signs or symptoms of medication impaired driving:

- Feeling drowsy/sleepy
- Blurred vision
- Headache
- Feeling weak
- Slowed reactions
- Dizziness
- Nausea, feeling sick
- Unable to focus or pay attention
- Being easily confused
- Having trouble forming a sentence
- Slurred speech
- Feeling wired and overconfident (although a person may not notice this themselves).

THE RISK MULTIPLIES IF YOU MIX ALCOHOL WITH MEDICATION OR DRUGS THAT MAY IMPAIR DRIVING. IT CAN MAKE YOU 23 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO FATALLY CRASH THAN DRIVERS WHO HAVE TAKEN NONE OF THESE 1.



If you have further queries, you can visit www.nzta.govt.nz/medication call our contact centre on 0800 699 000 or write to us at NZ Transport Agency Private Bag 6995, Wellington 6141.