

HEALTH & SAFETY

Drugs and driving

You may be over the limit and not even know it.

So what is in those pills you are popping?

WHAT are your views on driving any vehicle while under the influence of drink or drugs? The chances are you consider it to be completely unacceptable. You would also consider yourself to be a responsible adult that would never be over the drug limit for driving if you have to take prescription, or bought over the counter drugs. You always read the instructions carefully. Or do you?

These days there is a pill for every ill and they couldn't really be harmful or dangerous, or ordinary shops wouldn't be allowed to sell them. Or, if they were dangerous it would say it on the packet, right?

Wrong! A recent report, written in the most inaccessible language, has just been published by the boffins at Loughborough University. It lists 97 over-the-counter medicines, many of which most people

wouldn't think twice about taking, which can cause slow reaction or drowsiness. Taking any one of them could impair your ability to drive. Some could even send you to sleep at the wheel!!

The Professors point out that these dangers aren't always made as clear as they might be on the packet and warnings often only appear in the leaflet which accompanies the pills, but which no-one ever reads. After all, you've already bought them by then. Some drugs just have no adequate warning at all.

There are further dangers when different types of medicines are taken together, or drugs are taken after even a small amount of alcohol. These can combine to have a potentially lethal impact on your ability to drive, which you may be unable to detect yourself.

So, what about the law? The release from the Department of Transport, which announced the report, highlights the penalties for driving under the influence of legal drugs.

Under Section 4 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, you face penalties of a minimum ban of a year, a fine of up to £5,000 and up to six months in prison. A

as an LGV driver, once your first ban has ended, you have to appear before the Traffic Commissioner to be told that you still can't have your vocational licence back. It's exactly the same penalty for drink driving, because the law considers the dangers and therefore the offence, to be equally as serious.

So, if you are unwell, try out new medicines when you don't have to drive, or if you are unwell but still have to drive, go to the nearest chemist shop and explain your situation to the pharmacist and ask her / him which medicines are safe to take while driving.

But always remember the ultimate responsibility is yours!

Heather Lawrie is a *Tayside Women's Rep*

SO, for the responsible driver. here is a list of danger drugs published by the Department of Transport. They are sedating drugs which, although available without prescription over the counter, could still have an impact on driver performance.

Avoid taking them if you are driving.

Cough mixture and decongestants

Actifed, Actifed Compound Linctus, Actifed Expectorant, Benylin Chesty Coughs, Benylin with Codeine, Benylin Cough and Congestion, Benylin Dry Cough, Benylin Four Flu, Benylin Day & Night Cold & Flu Relief, Bronalin Expectorant, Contac 400, Covonia Night Time Formula, Dimotane Elixir/Tablets/LA, Dimotane Expectorant, Dimotane Co, Dimotane Plus, Dimotapp/Dimotapp LA, Dristan Tablets, Eskornade, Expullin,

Galpseud Plus, Guanor Expectorant, Haymine, Histalix, Medised, Night Nurse, Nirolex for Night-Time Coughs, Robitussin Night Time, Sudafed Plus, Triominic, Uniflu with Gregovite C, Vicks Medinite.

Anti-allergy medicines

Piriton Tablets/Syrup, Piriton Allergy, Boots Allergy Relief, Antihistamine Tablets, Calimal, Tavegil Tablets/Elixir, Aller-eze, Aller-eze Plus, Periactin, Phenergan Tablets/Elixir/Nighttime, Semprex, Benadryl Allergy Relief, Zirtek, Clarityn Tablets/Syrup/Allergy, Boots Hayfever Relief, Haymine.

Sleeping pills

Medinex, Nytol/Nytol One-A-Night, Panadol Night, Sominex.

Travel sickness

Cinnarizine (non-proprietary), Stugeron, Valoid Tablets, Sea-Legs, Avomine, Joy-Rides, Kwells

Painkillers

Boots Dental Pain Relief, Boots Migraine Relief, Boots Night-Cold Comfort, Boots Tension Headache Relief, Buscopan, Codis 500, Feminax, Flurex Bedtime, Medised, Migraleve, Panadeine, Panadol Ultra, Paracodol, Paramol, Propain, Solpadeine, Solpadeine Max, Syndol, Veganin.

Stomach drugs

Tagamet 100, Phimentin, Pepcid AC, Boots Excess Acid Control, Zantac 75, Arret Capsules, Boots Diareze, Diasorb, Diocalm Ultra, Imodium/Imodium Liquid, Normaloe, Imodium Plus, Diocalm, J Collis Browne's Mixture, Care Kaolin and Morphine Mixture, Enterosan, Opazimes.

Worm treatments

Pripsen Piperazine Citrate Elixir, Pripsen Powder.

Nasal allergy treatments

Livostin.