



Preventing Road Injuries Due to Medication Side Effects

In the United States, our society has clearly stated that drinking and driving do not mix. Every State has regulations designed to protect the public from the drinking driver. Driving under the influence of certain prescribed or over the counter medications can be a powerful and disastrous mix as well. But, driving while under the influence of prescribed or over the counter drugs may not be as obvious to all drivers.

"Driving under the influence of drugs" is a pretty tricky subject. For some people, taking certain medications can actually make safe driving possible. The real problem with prescribed or over the counter medications occurs when side effects reduce the driver's visual, physical or mental abilities. These skills are vital for safe driving performance.

10 Tips To Prevent Road Injuries When Using Medications

To reduce risks for having a road accident or related injuries due to medication side effects:

1. Pay close attention to changes in vision such as blurriness or visual distortions.
2. Watch for decline in physical abilities such as coordination, strength, balance.
3. Be concerned about changes in mental abilities including judgment, concentration, problem solving, etc.
4. Ask the doctor or pharmacist to explain the purpose and side effect of all prescribed medications before taking any drugs or driving a vehicle.
5. When taking any prescription medication combined with over the counter drug(s), be sure to check with the doctor or pharmacist for potential side effects (such as those that cause prescribed medications to be ineffective, or cause other reactions).
6. Don't drive for any reason or for any distance when under the influence of drugs that change either sensory awareness, physical or mental abilities.

7. Learn About Risks Associated with Classes of Medications

- alpha blockers (have a potential for low blood pressure, passing out)
- anti-diabetic agents (potential for low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), getting weak))
- drugs that cause sleep or sedation such as
 - ✓ benzodiazepines (tranquilizers, sedatives or depressants)
 - ✓ tri-cyclic antidepressants
 - ✓ and possibly opioids

8. **Sleep Deprivation or Fatigue:** Sleep is vital for safe driving. Falling asleep at the wheel risks the life of the driver, passengers, pedestrian and other drivers. The potential for serious injuries and death greatly increase. The best thing to do, is ***don't!***

9. **Alcohol and Medication Use:** Check with the pharmacist before combining alcohol and medications. Alcohol when mixed together with prescribed or over the counter medications, can actually change the medication's benefits. If medications are taken, be sure to find out which medications are safe to mix with alcohol, before taking them. You could be wasting your money, and hurting your health, if you don't know!

10. **Timed Release Medications:** Observe the effect on vision, physical and mental abilities, whenever using time released medications. If any changes are noted, avoid driving, until you know you able to responsibly operate a vehicle.