

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Common medicines can impair your driving**

Most people are aware of the dangers of drinking and driving but fewer realise that the medicines they are taking may impair skills needed to drive safely, according to Professor Olaf Drummer from the Department of Forensic Medicine, Monash University, writing in the current issue of ***Australian Prescriber***.

Medicines that may impair driving skills include some types of muscle relaxants, strong painkillers and medicines for a variety of conditions such as epilepsy, allergies, schizophrenia, anxiety and panic disorders, diabetes, depression and even a stuffy nose.

“It’s important for patients to read the label and to take note of information about the effects of their medicines on driving ability,” says Professor Drummer. “Any medicine that affects the central nervous system in particular can impair driving skills.”

Professor Drummer also writes, “Medicines generally aren’t big risk factors on the road when they are taken correctly.”

Impairment can result when a patient starts a new medicine, before the body adjusts and while the person is getting used to its effects, so this is a time to be particularly cautious.

“Be particularly careful about driving when taking a new medicine,” Professor Drummer writes. “In addition, many drugs can worsen the effects of sleep deprivation and increase the risk of a crash. This puts patients who are driving at night or working shifts at an increased risk of fatigue-related crashes.”

Alcohol and illicit drugs are more often to blame for road trauma than prescription medicines. Taking more than one medicine and then consuming alcohol, however, is a serious concern.

“Combinations of drugs including alcohol increase the opportunity for impairment and the risk of a serious crash,” he writes.

National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) encourages people taking medicines and multiple medicines to talk to their doctor or pharmacist to reduce the likelihood of adverse reactions.

For information on how medicines may affect your driving, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or contact the NPS Medicines Line on 1300 888 763.

**ENDS**

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### ***About Australian Prescriber***

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