



Medication and Driving (Prescription and Over-the-Counter)

Medication Use

- Nearly half of Americans reported taking one or more prescription drugs in the past 30 days, 31% reported taking two or more prescription medications and 11% reported taking three or more prescription medications.
- The types of prescription drugs used by Americans varies by age:
 - Adolescents (19 and younger): CNS stimulants (ADD), anti-depressants;
 - Adults (20-59): Antidepressants, analgesics (pain relief), and cholesterol lowering drugs;
 - Older adults (60+): Cholesterol lowering drugs, high blood pressure, and diuretics.
- In the last decade, the number of Americans taking at least one prescription drug increased by 10%, the use of multiple prescription drugs increased by 20%, and the use of five or more prescription drugs increased by 70%.
- The average number of prescriptions dispensed annually per person has increased 62% since the early 1990's, rising from 7.8 per person in 1993 to 12.6 per person in 2010.
- Prescription and OTC drug use increases with age.

Medication and Driving

- Only 28% of drivers consider driving under the influence of prescription drugs a very serious threat. In comparison, 66% of people consider driving under the influence of alcohol a very serious threat and 56% of people consider driving under the influence of illegal drugs a very serious threat.
- 35% of drivers reported self-regulating their driving in the past when they believed their medication would affect their ability to drive safely, according to a national roadside survey of nighttime weekend drivers.
- Studies have shown that certain medications increase driver's risk of being in a traffic crash.
 - Some types of antidepressants have been shown to increase crash risk by up to 41%.
 - Diphenhydramine (dye fen hye' dra meen) is an ingredient commonly found in over-the-counter cold and allergy medications:
 - This drug has been shown to severely impair the ability to follow at a safe and constant distance, maintain speed, and maintain lane position.
 - One single dose of this medication can have the same effect on driving as being above the legal limit for blood alcohol concentration.

Drug-Impaired Driving Statistics

- Prescription drugs are the most prevalent of all drugs found in drugged drivers involved in fatal crashes (46.5%), and the percentage has continually increased since 2005.
- Benzodiazepines (prescribed for anxiety or sleep disorders) and opiates (prescribed for pain relief) are the two prescription drugs most commonly found in fatal and seriously injured drivers.