**Over-the-Counter and Prescription Drugs
Drug-Impaired Driving

TALKING POINTS**

### Help raise awareness of the risks associated with getting behind the wheel after taking over-the-counter and prescription drugs. Overview

* Impaired driving is a significant danger on our roadways, and it is generally associated with alcohol, prescription drug abuse, or illegal drug use. However, many legally obtained and commonly used over-the-counter and prescription drugs can affect a user’s ability to drive safely.
* Cold and allergy medicines, antidepressants, opioids, and sleep aids can cause side effects, including drowsiness, nausea, and blurred vision, all of which can put motorists at risk.
* Some prescription drugs can induce drowsiness, cause nausea, affect judgement, and lessen coordination, all of which can prove fatal when driving.
* Over-the-counter drugs may cause drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, irregular heartbeat, or shakiness. Users should use caution to avoid operating heavy machinery, including motor vehicles, when taking these drugs.
* Prescription drugs, such as opioids, sedatives, muscle relaxants, and some antidepressants, have been associated with increased crash risk.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Some medications may not impair you on their own, but if taken with a second medication or with alcohol, they may cause impairment.
* Violating state DUI laws that make it illegal to drive impaired by any substance — including prescription drugs, OTC medications, illegal drugs, and alcohol — can result in arrest.
* In every U.S. state and territory, it is illegal to drive while impaired by any substance — no exceptions.
* Remember: *There’s More Than One Way to Be Under the Influence*.

**Stats**

**Only Drive Sober**

* Think twice before getting behind the wheel while using OTC or prescription drugs.
* If you are taking a prescription or over-the-counter medication, plan ahead for a sober driver to safely drive you to your destination. Although legally obtained, it is essential that drug-impaired drivers refrain from driving a vehicle. It is never okay to drive while impaired by any substance.
* If you have used an impairing substance, do not drive. Passengers should never ride with an impaired driver. If you think a driver may be impaired, do not get in the car.
* Do you have a friend who is impaired by a prescription or over-the-counter medication? Take the keys away and arrange to get them home safely. Don’t worry about offending someone — they’ll thank you later. And you might just save a life.
* If available, use your community’s sober ride program.
* If you see an impaired driver on the road, contact local law enforcement.

For more information, visit [www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/drug-impaired-driving](http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/safety-topics/drug-impaired-driving).

1. Institute for Safe Medication Practices [↑](#footnote-ref-1)