

You may not be aware of the extent to which your medication is affecting you. Pay particular attention to medications you have never used before. Reactions to, and effects of, medications can also change over time. For example, age, interactions with other medications you may be taking (Rx, OTC, or supplements), certain foods, or changes in your medical condition can cause a medication to react differently in your body and cause a change in your tolerance to a medication. Likewise, your HCP may change your dosage or frequency of a medication over time. Make sure you are taking a medication precisely as your HCP has prescribed.

The Rx and OTC medications that follow are drawn from National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) studies which have deemed certain Rx and OTC medications as “potentially driver-impairing.” The list is not all-inclusive; do not assume if your medication is not on this list it is “safe.” Consult your HCP or pharmacist to be sure.

### **OTC Medications**

OTC medications cause some of the most common and serious impairments due to their widespread use and belief OTCs are safe. Examples of OTCs with the potential to impair driving include:

- Anti-diarrheals
- Allergy medications (antihistamines)
- Cold and flu medications
- Motion sickness relievers
- Sedatives

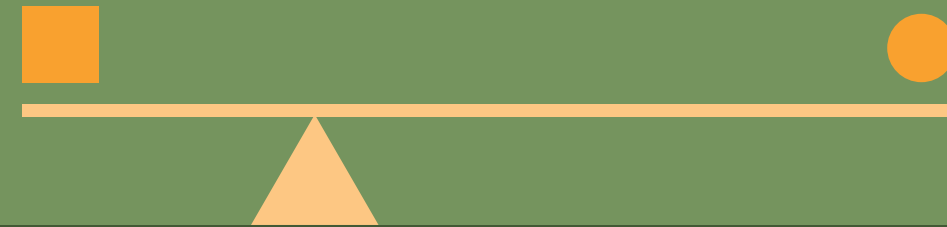
### **Prescription Medications**

Even the correct and responsible use of certain Rx medications can impact safety. These are some examples:

- Anti-convulsants
- Anti-anxiety medications
- Cough suppressants
- Anti-depressants
- Anti-hypertensives
- Hypoglycemic agents (diabetes)
- Gastrointestinal agents
- Hematologic agents
- Neuropathic pain relievers
- Moderate to severe pain relievers
- Respiratory inhalants
- Sedatives/hypnotics
- Smoking cessation medications
- Stimulants

# Balancing Safety AND Medical Treatment

## Safe Use of Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications



## Information for Safety-Sensitive **Employees**



U.S. Department of Transportation  
**Federal Transit Administration**

**Please note** that this brochure contains best practices only; FTA does not have regulations regarding Rx/OTC

# The Responsibility of a Safety-Sensitive Employee

As a safety-sensitive employee, it is your responsibility to safely perform your assigned job duties. This brochure contains information on the general use of prescription and over-the-counter (Rx/OTC) medications by safety-sensitive employees—in particular, those medications which have the potential to impair driving—and questions to ask of prescribers and pharmacists. The misuse or abuse of Rx/OTC medications is a serious safety issue. However, even the responsible and correct use of some Rx/OTC medications can also impact safety.

**Be informed** about any Rx/OTC medications you currently use or may use in the future. Being informed so you can talk knowledgeably with prescribing health-care professionals and pharmacists is essential to your proper medical treatment, your safety, and the safety of the traveling public.

**Be knowledgeable** so you can make informed decisions about your health and the safe performance of your assigned job duties. It is important for you to know how Rx/OTC medications may affect your ability to drive, assist passengers, and perform other safety-sensitive duties.

**Be proactive** in becoming familiar with and understanding your employer's policies; communicating directly with your prescriber

“The misuse or abuse of Rx/OTC medications is a serious safety issue. However, even the responsible and correct use of some Rx/OTC medications can also impact safety.”

or pharmacist about the nature of your safety-sensitive job functions and the medications you currently take; and working with your prescriber or pharmacist to develop a medical treatment program that ensures you receive the medical treatment you need without compromising your ability to perform your job duties safely.

**Notify** your employer immediately if you experience any side effects that impact your physical, mental, or cognitive skills needed to perform your job.

**Never perform any safety-sensitive function while impaired and/or experiencing medication side effects.**

## Talking to Your HCP or Pharmacist

You should inform your prescribing health-care professional (HCP) (including physicians, dentists, optometrists, and nurse practitioners) and your pharmacist that your job requires the performance of safety-sensitive functions.

Take a copy of your job description; any Rx/OTC medication forms your employer may require; a complete list of all medications you currently take with you to talk with your prescriber or pharmacist. Together, you and your prescriber and/or pharmacist should discuss your treatment needs and options so that you can make informed decisions about your treatment and the medications you take including dosage, frequency, and timing of use in relation to your work schedule.

## Be Familiar with Employer Policies

If you do not already have copies of these policies, contact your supervisor or human resources department to obtain guidance on these policies and any required forms you may need to provide to your health-care professional.

Once you have read all of the policies and procedures, speak with your supervisor.

### Questions for Your Prescriber or Pharmacist

Ask your prescriber or pharmacist: What are the short- and long-term effects of the medication on your safety-sensitive performance? Is there an alternate dosage schedule that would allow you to take medication and continue to perform your safety-sensitive duties? Is there an alternate medication that will be effective and allow you to perform your safety-sensitive duties?

After discussing your medications with your HCP or pharmacist, always read your medication labels carefully for proper dosages, dosing frequency, potential interactions with other medications or food, and especially its potential to impair driving. And, always keep your medication in the original package to refer to when needed.

### Potentially Driver-Impairing Medications

Many Rx/OTC medications have the potential to impair driving as well as the performance of other safety-sensitive duties. *(continued)*

“Be proactive in becoming familiar with and understanding your employer's policies.”