



Treatment with benzodiazepines and their repercussion at the steering wheel

The Spanish Traffic Department has issued a warning that the risk of serious injury or death after a road accident, associated with the consumption of psychoactive drugs, is from two to 10 times higher than if no such drugs had been consumed.

Most drugs prescribed as anxiolytics or hypnotics are benzodiazepines, and these are the drugs most commonly related to road traffic accidents: in approximately 8 percent of crashes, the driver is taking benzodiazepines.

Many hypnotic drugs can reduce the ability to perform routine tasks, including driving, if the residual effects persist after waking.

A few key facts about treatment with benzodiazepines

Current medical practice tends to limit the use of benzodiazepines to short treatments and propose alternatives such as antidepressants or non-pharmacological treatments. The side effects with an impact on driving ability are:

- Cognitive impairment, reducing the ability to make decisions in an emergency.
- Uninhibited and impulsive behavior. The risk is even greater when combined with alcohol.
- Difficulty in judging the distance of moving vehicles and in performing maneuvers like braking, accelerating and steering.
- Overdosing on benzodiazepines can primarily produce: drowsiness, ataxia (lack of muscle coordination), slurred speech and respiratory depression.

6 tips on taking benzodiazepines



Only take this medication if prescribed by a physician

And preferably for short periods of time because it creates dependency and, if stopped suddenly, withdrawal symptoms.



Treatment plans are personalized and subject to medical supervision.

The same drug can produce different side effects according to the age of the patient, with a greater impact older people than young ones.



Benzodiazepines are directly related to increased risk behind the wheel.

Check with your physician and honestly consider your ability to drive if you are being treated with these drugs.



Never take alcohol and benzodiazepines together.

The risk of an accident has been shown to be far higher when they are combined.



Physicians should always warn patients of the side effects of their medication

Advising them against driving if their mental status is impaired and providing guidance on how to minimize the interference on their daily lives.



Driving is particularly unadvisable in the case of professional drivers

Whose employers should be alerted to the situation so that they can assign the worker to a different task or adapt their work schedule.