Opiate substitution Therapy (Methadone and Buprenorphine) and driving

Information for you

Prevention and Service Support Team
Improving knowledge of addictions through education and training

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Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet by your worker to make you aware of the danger and risks posed if you drive while on a methadone programme. Your worker has a responsibility to alert you to these risks.

The Road Traffic Act requires licence holders or applicants to tell the DVLA of ‘any disability likely to affect safe driving.’ They consider drug use to be a ‘disability’ in this context.

Your driving licence is invalid if you are on a methadone treatment programme, unless the DVLA agrees after receiving supportive medical advice.

If you are involved in an accident and have not told the DVLA of your current medical condition then you may be prosecuted and your insurance may not be valid.

If you are driving or are planning to drive please arrange an appointment with your prescribing doctor as soon as possible.
Prescription methadone: oral

Once you have told the DVLA they will ask that you have a short, independent, medical examination, which includes a urine test for illegal drugs. If there is only prescribed oral Methadone or Buprenorphine in your urine, and you have been on a stable dose for a year, they will normally issue you with a licence for one year.

Injecting, snorting or smoking Methadone or Buprenorphine

Taking your Methadone or Buprenorphine in any way other than intended by the prescriber (different route, different dose, all in one go etc) will mean that, if discovered, your licence will be withdrawn. You will then be called back for another medical when your licence needs to be renewed (or when you reapply) and every year until three years after your prescription has stopped.

What if the test is positive for illegal drugs?

If illegal drugs are found, the DVLA will withdraw your licence for one year. You will need to take another medical when you reapply for your licence and every three years, once you get it back.
Giving your licence to the DVLA

Giving your licence removes the need for the DVLA to make formal medical enquiries into your ability to drive. If the DVLA make medical enquiries and these confirm that you cannot meet the required medical standards to drive, your licence will have to be revoked, which may result in you having to re-sit your driving test.

Car or motorcycle licence

Applicants or drivers who are on a consultant-supervised oral methadone maintenance programme may be able to keep their licences if they have been assessed and have a medical review every year.

Bus, coach or lorry licence

If you are on a successful consultant-supervised oral methadone maintenance programme you may be considered for a licence after a three year period of stability. You will have to have a review every year and provide random urine tests and assessment. Expert panel advice is required in each case.
How to re-apply for your driving licence

For a car or motorcycle licence you’ll need to fill in a D1 application form and the medical questionnaire relevant to your condition. The D1 form is available from DVLA’s form ordering service or the Post Office. For a lorry or bus licence, a D2 application is available from the DVLA’s form ordering service online.

You must renew your driving licence after surrendering or having it revoked by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) before you start driving again.

Checking your health

You should check with your worker that you can meet the medical standards of fitness to drive before you re-apply for your driving licence. These standards are set out in the ‘At a glance guide to the current standards of fitness to drive’. All medical practitioners have access to this publication.

For further information on fitness to drive and medical rules for all drivers please visit the website:

http://www.gov.uk/dvla-medical-enquiries
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