



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of the University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers

Ten Tips for Safety-Sensitive Staff Who Must Take Medications



1 *Be cautious.* All medications, whether prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC), have the potential to be dangerous. Use medications cautiously and always in accordance with your physician's directions. Do not perform any safety-sensitive function if you are impaired by any medication. This caution should not be construed, however, to require any FTA-covered employee to delay or deny any necessary medical treatment.

2 *Inform your prescribing physician, dentist or other medical professional.* Before accepting a prescription, inform the prescriber of your safety-sensitive position (if applicable) and explain your job duties. Do not assume he/she will remember your explanation from one visit to the next. Remind him/her of any other

medications you are taking, and make sure to include those medications prescribed by other physicians. Make sure the physician has your complete medical history. Ask if you will be able to perform your duties safely on these medications. If not, ask if there are alternatives. Follow your employer's policy and procedures for documenting the physician's assessment and release-to-work statement, if applicable.

3 *Solicit information from your pharmacist.* Anytime you need additional information about an Rx or

An individual's reaction to a medication may vary with each treatment, the nature of the illness and other medications taken.

OTC, ask your pharmacist. A pharmacist will be very knowledgeable about the medication ingredients, side-effects, precautions, and drug interactions. Even if you have already obtained information from your prescribing physician, your pharmacist may be more knowledgeable and able to provide additional information and insight. Read warning labels and side-effects delineated on information summaries provided with Rx and OTCs.

4 *Do not over-medicate.* Always follow the prescription directly as written. Never increase the dosage or frequency of use without explicit directions from your doctor. Not only is this practice medically risky, but increased doses of a medication may cause impairment when the same medication used as recommended may not.

5 *Check the strength of the prescription.* Sometimes medicines are prescribed in different strengths (i.e., 500 vs 250 mg). Do not take a pill without first checking the dosage

and comparing it to the prescription, even if you have taken this medication before or it's a refill.

6 *Never take someone else's medication.* Even if you have taken this medication or one like it before. This is illegal, dangerous, and it may cause impairment.

7 *Always monitor your reaction.* Anytime you take any medication (Rx or OTC) watch for any side-effects which could impact your ability to perform your job safely,

go to next page

including drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, etc. Try to get used to the medication first before reporting for work. The same applies even if you have taken this medication in the past with no previous side-effects. An individual's reaction to a medication may vary with each treatment, the nature of the illness and other medications taken.

8 *Avoid Rx/OTCs that have been problems in the past.* If you have taken medications in the past that have caused negative side-effects, make a note of the active ingredients and avoid these in the future. Inform your prescribing physician of your problem with the previous medication and ask for alternative medications that do not have this ingredient. For OTCs, read the ingredient portion of the label and ask the pharmacist for assistance.

9 *Ask for alternative treatments or dosage schedule.* If you notice side-effects that could pose a safety risk, consult your prescribing physician (or pharmacist in the case of an OTC) about alternative treatments, medications, dosages, or schedule of use. You may be able to avoid the negative side-effects by simply shifting the dosage schedule to take your medications following your shift rather than before.

10 *Do not perform safety-sensitive duties while impaired.* In instances where no alternative is available, you must inform your supervisor and follow your employers Rx/OTC procedures for removal from safety-sensitive duty. Do not perform any safety-sensitive duty while you are impaired by any medication.

Reprinted from *Summer 2002 FTA Drug And Alcohol Regulation Updates*, Issue 22. ▲