

FDA warns sleep medications can cause fatigue the next morning

Written by Australian Business

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As new medications tailored to help individuals get a good night's sleep continue to flood the market, the Food and Drug Administration has taken an increased interest in the effect of these medications on motorists. Many Americans have turned to sleep aids when they are unable to sleep soundly, but questions have been raised as to whether these medications may create dangers on our roads in the morning.

According to IMS Health, a research firm, there were approximately 60 million prescriptions issued for sleep medications in the U.S. in 2012. Generally, individuals will take the medication in the evening to ensure a good night's rest. Unfortunately, most people are not aware of the potentially ongoing side effects from the medications, which could affect their ability to operate a motor vehicle.

When a motorist is not alert and attentive, the risk of an auto accident increases. In 2007, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conducted a study, which revealed that 5 percent of motorists were under the influence of medications while driving during the day.

As a result of the concerns regarding drowsy driving accidents, the FDA has increased regulation on sleep medications in the U.S. For instance, earlier this year, the FDA announced that the manufacturers of Ambien had to reduce the recommended dosage for women by 50 percent. The FDA also recently turned down an application for a new sleep medication after test results revealed that it had lasting effects that affected motorists' ability to drive the next morning.

Avoid serious drowsy driving accidents

Drowsy driving collisions are more common than many might imagine, often due to the lasting effects of sleep medications. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are around 5,000 to 6,000 fatal motor vehicle accidents caused by fatigued motorists each year.

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has suggested that around 2.5 percent of all fatal auto accidents are the result of a drowsy driver. In addition, approximately 2 percent of collisions that result in an individual sustaining a personal injury are caused by drowsy drivers.

Consequently, motorists should take steps to ensure they are alert enough to safely operate a motor vehicle before getting behind the wheel. It is always a good idea for drivers to get a good night's sleep -- defined as seven or eight hours -- the night before driving. In addition, motorists should never get on the road if they are under the influence of sleep medications or alcohol.

If you or a loved one has been injured in a motor vehicle accident caused by a fatigued motorist, consult with a skilled personal injury attorney to protect your rights.