

DOT medication restrictions list

Medication tiers under 49 CFR 391.41(b)(12), and the certified examiner's four-step review

FMCSA publishes no official list of banned medications. It sets one standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(12) and leaves individual drugs to the examiner. This reference sorts a driver's medications into the three tiers that standard creates, then walks the review in the order the rule applies.

A driver qualifies under either part of the rule. **Part (i):** they use no Schedule I substance, amphetamine, narcotic or other habit-forming drug. **Part (ii):** they use a non-Schedule I controlled substance only as prescribed, by a licensed practitioner who knows their history and has advised them it will not adversely affect safe operation of a commercial motor vehicle.

1. THE THREE MEDICATION TIERS

TIER	DRUG CLASS	EXAMPLES	DEA SCHEDULE	FMCSA STATUS
TIER 1 Schedule I Never permitted. No prescription, state law or physician letter moves a drug out of this tier.	Schedule I substances	Heroin, LSD, MDMA, psilocybin, recreational marijuana	Schedule I 21 CFR 1308.11	Disqualifying while in use
	Marijuana, every form	Including products sold under a state medical marijuana license	Schedule I, or Schedule III since April 2026 for FDA-approved and state-licensed medical products	Prohibited for drug-tested drivers whatever the schedule
TIER 2 Schedules II to V, prescribed Case by case under part (ii). The prescriber advises on safe driving; the examiner decides.	Opioids	Oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, methadone, codeine, tramadol	Schedule II, with tramadol in Schedule IV	Permitted with review
	Amphetamines and other stimulants	Amphetamine salts (Adderall), lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse), dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine), methylphenidate (Ritalin)	Schedule II 21 CFR 1308.12	Permitted with review
	Benzodiazepines	Alprazolam, diazepam, lorazepam, clonazepam	Schedule IV 21 CFR 1308.14	Permitted with review
	Barbiturates	Phenobarbital, butalbital combinations, pentobarbital	Schedules II to IV	Permitted with review
TIER 3 Non-scheduled Outside the controlled substance rule. Judged on the condition treated and the side effects.	Blood pressure medications	Any class. The reading matters more than the drug	Not scheduled	At or below 140/90 mm Hg supports a two-year certificate; higher readings shorten it
	Antidepressants	SSRIs and SNRIs	Not scheduled	Review stability of the condition, drowsiness and reaction time
	Non-stimulant ADHD medications	Atomoxetine, guanfacine	Not scheduled	Review symptoms and side effects
	Gabapentin	Gabapentin	Not federally scheduled, though some states schedule it	Check for sedation and dizziness
	Insulin	All insulin-treated diabetes	Not scheduled	Needs form MCSA-5870 from the treating clinician. Certify for up to 12 months at a time
	Non-insulin diabetes medications	Metformin, sulfonylureas, GLP-1 agonists and others	Not scheduled	Review glucose control and any history of severe hypoglycemia

Where marijuana stands in 2026. An Attorney General order effective April 23, 2026 moved FDA-approved marijuana drug products, and marijuana held under a qualifying state medical license, from Schedule I to Schedule III. Recreational marijuana stays in Schedule I while a separate rulemaking runs. DOT has confirmed its drug testing rules did not change: marijuana remains prohibited for safety-sensitive employees, and a Medical Review Officer cannot accept a state medical card as a legitimate explanation for a positive test.

2. THE EXAMINER'S FOUR-STEP REVIEW

Run every drug on the driver's list through these four checks, in this order. Only the first two end in a fixed answer. The rest go to the examiner's judgment.

ASK ABOUT THE DRUG

1

Is it a Schedule I drug?
Heroin, LSD, MDMA, psilocybin, recreational marijuana

2

Is it marijuana of any kind?
Includes state-licensed medical marijuana, in Schedule III since April 2026

3

Is it a prescribed drug in Schedules II to V?
Opioids, stimulants, benzodiazepines, barbiturates

4

Is it non-scheduled?
Blood pressure medications, SSRIs, gabapentin, insulin

WHAT FOLLOWS

✗ Cannot be certified while using it
No prescription, state law or physician letter changes this.

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✗ Still prohibited for drug-tested drivers
A medical marijuana card is not accepted as an explanation by the Medical Review Officer.

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? Case by case, with the prescriber's advice
The prescriber advises on safe driving, often on the optional form MCSA-5895. The examiner makes the decision.

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? Examiner reviews the condition and the side effects
Insulin-treated diabetes also needs form MCSA-5870 from the treating clinician.

Only a medical examiner listed on FMCSA's National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners can issue a valid medical examiner's certificate.

3. THE FORMS BEHIND THE DECISION

FORM	NAME	WHAT IT DOES
MCSA-5895	CMV Driver Medication Form	Optional. With the driver's consent, the examiner sends it to the prescribing provider, who records every medication and dose, the conditions treated, and whether any of it would adversely affect safe operation. It carries the prescriber's opinion, not the certification decision
MCSA-5870	Insulin-Treated Diabetes Mellitus Assessment Form	Completed by the treating clinician for a driver on insulin. The examiner then certifies for up to 12 months at a time
MCSA-5875	Medical Examination Report Form	Where the examiner records each finding and the certification decision. This is the official record

Retention. Keep examination records for at least 3 years, as 49 CFR 391.43 requires. That is the federal floor; state medical record law or an employer policy may require longer. Over-the-counter drugs and supplements fall outside MCSA-5895, so ask the driver to bring a full medication list and review those separately.

This template summarizes 49 CFR 391.41(b)(12), 49 CFR Part 40 and FMCSA guidance as a working reference. It is not issued by FMCSA or DOT, and it does not replace the regulation, the FMCSA Medical Examiner Handbook, or your own judgment as a certified examiner.

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