

October 9, 1991

NOAA DIVING SAFETY BULLETIN #91-03

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Divers

FROM: J. Morgan Wells
NOAA Diving Coordinator

SUBJECT: Medications and Diving

The following information was released by the Naval Safety Center, Norfolk VA, 28 September 1991. It is forwarded for your information by the NOAA Diving Center, Seattle WA.

1. There are no drugs or medications considered absolutely safe while diving. Any drug which influences the conscious state of the diver may also affect the susceptibility to nitrogen narcosis and oxygen toxicity. Whereas other medications may complicate the diagnosis or assessment of diving disorders.
2. There are numerous unpredictable effects of medications on the body due to age, sex, weight, cold, fatigue, anxiety, and possible sensitivity to them.
 - A. Drugs that may be taken without undue risk while diving:
 - (1) Aspirin/tylenol/motrin
 - (2) Pseudoephedrine, e.g. sudafed
 - (3) Antibiotics: appear safe under pressure in most cases. The underlying condition for which the antibiotic is taken could preclude diving. e.g. bronchitis or pneumonia.
 - (4) Birth control pills if the individual knows the risks and potential/theoretical risk. Cleared by DMO.
 - (5) Thyroid medications: Once cleared by the DMO.
 - (6) Diuretics: For mild blood pressure elevation. Cleared by DMO.
 - (7) Vitamins: As a daily supplement.

B. As a general rule, any prescription or non-prescription drug other than those on the above list, preclude diving without an approval by a Diving Medical Officer. Specifically, drugs that will not be taken while diving include:

- (1) Antidiarrheal: e.g Lomotil, paregoric, etc. should not be used because of narcotic content.
- (2) Stimulants: May cause dizziness, excessive sweating, euphoria, anxiety and panic at depths as shallow as 50 fsw.
- (3) Alcohol: Often found in cough medicine.
- (4) Heart medications: Digitalis and anti-arrythmia drugs will not be used. Underlying conditions preclude diving.
- (5) Insulin and oral hypoglycemics: Diabetics should not dive.
- (6) Drug dependence: Any active use of addicting drugs is a contraindication to diving.
- (7) Antihistamines: (Anti-allergy and anti-motion sickness). They may act as a depressant. They are used for seasickness and have side effects of drowsiness. They generally should not be used prior to diving. Especially where nitrogen narcosis may occur.

3. Upon completion of the prescription drug usage, medical clearance by a Diving Medical Officer is required before diving status can be resumed.

4. This message has been coordinated with the office of CNO, BUMED.

NOAA divers can obtain additional information about specific medications by contacting NDC. We will direct all inquiries through the NOAA DMO.