



Consumer Watch

A Monthly Newsletter from the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

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Dannel P. Malloy, Governor

www.ct.gov/dcp

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Suggested Links

www.ct.gov/dcp

Our website offers the latest and most comprehensive information that we have on dozens of consumer-related topics!

www.smartconsumer.ct.gov

Basic information to protect yourself and avoid scams!

<https://www.elicense.ct.gov>

To verify a license, permit or registration, or to run a roster of licensees. Also, the place for online renewal!

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10 Tips for Saving on Gasoline this Summer

Summertime -- Connecticut's prime season for family vacations, day trips, and sports events. Overall, consumers of all ages tend to be out and about a bit more during the warmer months. Whether it's taking in a little league game or hitting the farmers' markets, the Department of Consumer Protection is offering advice for saving on gasoline expenses.

While global fuel markets and distribution networks determine fuel prices, here are ten

simple ways that drivers can save on gasoline this summer:

1. Get a tune-up. A well-maintained car uses less fuel; a poorly tuned engine increases fuel consumption by up to 20 percent. Make sure your transmission fluid is at the right level too.
 - Change the oil, air filter and fuel filter in your car according to the manufacturer's instructions. All three affect the performance of your vehicle. A clogged air filter can reduce mileage by up to 10 percent. Be sure to use the right grade of oil for your car depending on the season and driving conditions.
2. Give your tires some attention. Poorly aligned tires make the engine work harder and burn more fuel. You can tell if your car needs an alignment if there is pulling on the steering wheel when you are driving. Also, regularly rotating your tires and checking them for uneven wear will save both on tires and gas.

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In the heart of a typical summer, increased travel demands tend to coincide with increases in gasoline prices, due to a combination of factors both economic and geo-political. While we can't set prices, we can offer guidance in making your gas dollar stretch a bit further, as evidenced in our lead article. Thinking of shedding a few pounds before hitting the beach? Don't look to quick-fix diet supplements for solutions. As our article on page 2 illustrates, there's just no substitute for diet and exercise, though hucksters will try to convince you otherwise. Persons administering in good faith the anti-overdose drug Narcan have greater protection through a new law, as outlined on page 2. Producers and dispensary facilities for medical marijuana are gearing up for late summer / early fall, and on page 3 we offer reminders for anyone interested in participating as a patient or caregiver. Summer is also a time of increased freedom and independence for our young people. But treating underage drinking as a rite of passage into adulthood is no longer appropriate nor reasonable. See our reasons on page 4. Stay safe and enjoy the season!



William M. Rubenstein

Bill Rubenstein

Connecticut's New Tool to Help Address Drug Overdoses

[A new law](#) signed by Governor Malloy will protect "good Samaritans" who take action to stop another person from overdosing. The law, which goes into effect October 1, grants civil and criminal immunity to someone who, in good faith, administers Naloxone Hydrochloride (Narcan) to a person experiencing a drug overdose.

The law aims to reduce deaths caused by heroin and prescription drug overdoses. Narcan is a prescription medication that reverses an opioid overdose. It can be administered by anyone with minimal training and is most commonly available as either an injection or nasal spray.

Two years ago, [Public Act 12-159](#) allowed prescribers to provide naloxone prescriptions to anyone in close contact with a person addicted to opioids, so that they could provide a medical intervention in the case of an opioid overdose.

Anyone who suspects a loved one is using heroin or abusing pills such as oxycodone or other opioids can ask their doctor for a written prescription for Narcan, get that prescription filled at their local pharmacy, and keep the medication handy, along with the accompanying instructions. Narcan costs between \$20 and \$40.

Drug overdose is a leading cause of death in the United States, and in the 20-64 year age group, causes more deaths than motor vehicle crashes.

The Department of Consumer Protection is quite involved in efforts to combat deaths from overdoses by implementing widespread drug take back days and prescription drug drop boxes to safely dispose of unneeded medication. Also, the agency's statewide Prescription Monitoring Program helps to ensure that only medically necessary prescriptions are filled.

Here's The "Skinny" on Quick-Fix Weight Loss Products

How do they get away with it? Whether it's pills, patches or creams, there's so much advertising out there promising quick and easy weight loss without diet or exercise. Magazines targeting women and teens are bulging with them. But the claims are bogus, some products are even harmful, and in this land of opportunity that encourages the free market and promises the right to free speech, the government is only now scratching the surface in eradicating this evolved brand of hucksterism.

The only true way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and get more exercise. Promises, testimonials, and celebrity endorsements for new products can only truthfully assure you one thing -- you will waste your money.

Last year, marketers of acai berry products took heat for the false claims they made; this year, sellers of green coffee are under fire for their deceptive claims. In May, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) sued a company making bogus weight loss claims and using fake news websites to market the dietary supplement "Pure Green Coffee." Even Dr. Mehmet Oz, popular host of the syndicated *The Dr. Oz Show*, found himself testifying before a Senate panel this month over his claims that Pure Green Coffee can cause "miracle" weight loss.



Oz can and does capture the interest and purse strings of his sizable audience of devotees by using his medical credentials to suggest that products like Pure Green Coffee extract (\$50 for a one-month supply) will help them lose weight rapidly without changing diet or exercise habits. Throughout the Senate hearing, lawmakers politely quarreled with Oz over his endorsement of weight-loss remedies. Though he said he "heard the message," the doctor did not back down from arguing on behalf of his approach.

"I do personally believe in the items that I talk about," Oz said. "If you can lose a pound a week more than you would have lost without the product, it jumpstarts you and gets you going. I think it makes sense." But the bogus ads were promising much greater results than that.

The FTC charges that Pure Green Coffee, Inc. and its co-defendants made false and unsupported advertising claims, including:

- that consumers using Pure Green Coffee could lose 20 pounds in four weeks and 16% body fat in 12 weeks;
- that studies prove Pure Green Coffee could yield the results above without diet or exercise.
- that websites linked to the Pure Green Coffee webpage were objective news sites with articles written by objective news reporters -- these were in fact ads designed to look like news sites, in some cases even "borrowing" logos from news organizations like CNN and MSNBC.

The FTC is also working to stop other national marketers from using deceptive ads to sell similar weight-loss products. For instance, marketers of Sensa, who urged consumers to "sprinkle, eat, and lose weight" will pay \$26.5 million to settle charges that they deceived consumers with unfounded weight-loss claims and misleading endorsements. The FTC also charged marketers at L'Occitane for claiming that a certain skin cream slimmed users' bodies -- with no science to back it up. HCG Diet Direct, which marketed an unproven human hormone as a weight-loss treatment, was also censured. Claims touting the current fad item, Garcinia Cambogia, are likely to meet the same fate.

There is no magic formula for weight loss. The best way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and be more active, and permanent weight loss requires permanent lifestyle changes. Don't trust any product that promises once-and-for-all results. Report fraudulent weight loss product claims to the [FTC](#).

True or False?

Using premium-grade gasoline during the hottest months gives better fuel efficiency and is better for cars in general.

True or False? Answer, page 4

Update on the Medical Marijuana Program

The Medical Marijuana Program remains on track for product to be available at dispensary facilities by late summer or early fall. All of the production facilities have made significant progress in building out their facilities, and Drug Control inspectors have been to each location on several occasions to inspect the work as it progresses and to ensure that the plans approved by the Department are being implemented. Likewise, we have been in regular contact with the licensed dispensary facilities to ensure they are on track to be ready to open once product is available from the producers.

Once dispensary facilities open, registered patients and caregivers may purchase up to 2.5 ounces of medical marijuana per month, unless the patient's certifying physician indicates that a lower amount is appropriate. The Department is not setting prices on marijuana products.

Patients will need a valid registration card from the Connecticut Medical Marijuana Program in order to enter any dispensary facility or purchase medical marijuana. To qualify for a registration card, the patient must meet certain [requirements](#).

Medical Marijuana cards issued by the Department are valid for one year. Anyone who received their card more than 12 months ago needs to [renew](#) their registration and get a new card.

A Medical Marijuana registration card does not permit use of marijuana:

- in a motor bus or a school bus or in any other moving vehicle;
- in the workplace;
- on any school grounds or any public or private school, dormitory, college or university property;
- in any public place;
- in the presence of a person under the age of eighteen (18); or
- in any other way that endangers the health

If someone you know intends to buy medical marijuana when dispensary facilities open later this year, but have not yet spoken to their physician, they can prevent later delays by making an appointment with their doctor soon to begin the process of becoming certified and registered, as described in this [brochure](#).

Contact dcp.mmp@ct.gov with registration and certification questions.

Saving on Gasoline, continued from page 1

- Use a tire gauge to check your car's tire pressure every month. If your tires are low on air, you're wasting gas and money. The best time to check tire pressure is when the tires are cool – not right after a long drive. In hot weather, check the pressure during the coolest part of the day. Inflate your tires to the recommended Pounds per Square Inch (PSI).
- By the way, it's against the law for gas stations in Connecticut to charge for using their air hose. The law says that air for tires has to be free. Email us at dcp.foodandstandards@ct.gov if you experience a problem in this area.

3. Remove unnecessary weight. Tools, topsoil and fertilizer should be in the car only as long as needed. Roof racks and bike racks create "drag," which ups your fuel use, so when packing for a trip, fit as much in the trunk as you can.

4. Plan driving routes so you can travel at a constant speed as much as possible. Avoid rush hours when planning your long-distance drives and bypass construction zones if you can.

5. Use the Internet to find good gasoline prices. One popular national site is www.fueleconomy.gov. Here are more resources:

- AAA Fuel Gauge: <http://www.fuelgaugereport.com/>
- Motor Trends: www.motortrend.com/gas_prices
- Consumer-reported gas prices: www.Gasbuddy.com

6. Buy mid-week, when prices tend to be lower than weekends and holidays.

7. Pay in ways that help you save. Many gas stations offer reduced prices for cash purchases. Cash purchases do not include payments by debit card.

Due to the fee that sellers must pay to process a debit purchase, gas paid for by debit card often costs the same as the credit card rate. If you use credit at the pump, think about getting a gasoline credit card that offers a five or ten percent rebate back on every gas purchase. Other cards provide reward points, coupons or similar benefits, so you may offset the price of gas with savings somewhere else. To make any credit reward or benefit a "net win" however, you must pay your credit bill on time to avoid finance charges.

8. Look into deals offered by your existing "memberships" -- some stores offer gas points, and wholesale clubs, automobile clubs, and other organizations offer gas discounts to members.

9. Use the lowest grade of gas recommended for your vehicle. For most cars, higher octane gas is a waste of money, and octane has nothing to do with the quality of the gas. Check your manual to see if you can use regular gas. You'll save plenty at each visit to the pump.

10. Don't skimp on volume; fill up the tank when you can. Driving on or near "Empty" actually burns more fuel, because your vehicle is struggling to operate. Keep your gas tank at least ½ full.



Summertime = ~~NO~~ Time for Underage Drinking and Driving

As we did during the summer of 2013, the Department is coordinating with the Departments of Motor Vehicles, Transportation, Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Governor's Prevention Partnership, area hospital medical staff, state and local law enforcement and other stakeholders to raise public awareness about an issue that tends to get worse as the weather improves. The problem is a summertime surge in underage drinking and binge drinking that leads to sizeable increases in Emergency Department visits, minor and major traffic accidents, motor vehicle violations, hospitalizations, injuries and deaths.

Using grant funds provided by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, this volunteer collaborative is launching a summer-long campaign focused on parents of teens to impress upon them the real-world, life-altering consequences at stake whenever their children consume alcohol and get into a motor vehicle. Increased enforcement at liquor stores, grocery stores, concerts, house parties, and wherever youth gather is also planned.

Experts agree that in the summer, young people, released from the requirements of school and other scheduled activities, find more opportunities for engaging in risky behaviors such as drinking and driving. We're not exactly starting at zero, either. One in five high school freshmen responding to Connecticut's 2013 School Health Survey reported having at least one drink of alcohol in the prior month, a rate that increased with each year of high school. A full 51.3 percent of Connecticut high school seniors surveyed in 2013 reported drinking alcohol in the prior month. A third of these seniors reported binge drinking in the past month. Nearly 14 percent of high school seniors said they drove after drinking alcohol and 25.2 percent rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol. Let's not treat underage drinking as a "rite of passage." It's dangerous and illegal.

While the Liquor Control Division works all year with local law enforcement and youth volunteers trained by the Governor's Prevention Partnership to prevent youth access to alcohol by conducting undercover compliance checks at liquor stores, grocery stores that sell beer, and other permitted locations statewide, about 25% of premises tested still sell to minors. Those who do face appropriate sanctions and sustained monitoring. Our experience tells us that minors also obtain alcohol from older friends and relatives; many solicit purchases from strangers in store parking lots. Often, they lift it from their parents' supply, particularly if the supply is unmonitored.

Parents should set clear expectations and provide firm rules regarding **no alcohol use by anyone under age 21** -- in the family, at home, or anywhere on their property. Parents can and should have a tremendous impact, and are role

models for their children. Careful monitoring of teens' whereabouts is also important, even if it requires uncomfortable conversations with other parents to ensure supervision at a party. Given the amount of pre-drinking that has become routine among some young concert-goers, parents may want to drive teens directly to the concert gate rather than dropping them off in the lot or letting them catch a ride with another teen.

Summer does offer youth more freedom, but this should not come at the expense of your child's future or that of anyone else. The Department of Consumer Protection receives and investigates complaints of sale or service to minors. We encourage the public to file such a complaint by calling 860-713-6210 and speaking with a liquor control agent or by email at dcp.liquorcontrol@ct.gov.

Minors also obtain alcohol from older friends and relatives; many solicit purchases from strangers in store parking lots. Often, they lift it from their parents' supply, particularly if the supply is unmonitored.

True or False? (from page 3)

ANSWER: *The answer is False.* Unless your vehicle specifically requires premium gas, using higher-octane gas won't improve mileage and may even hurt the engine. Double check your owner's manual to see what your car or truck needs. As a rule, you want to use what the manufacturer specifies. *Side Note: According to Edmunds.com, "advances in engine technology mean that even if the owner's manual recommends premium gas, the car will typically run on regular without issue and won't damage the engine." Edmunds has compiled two lists: "premium recommended" and "premium required" for vehicles from 2009-2014. If your vehicle is on the "premium recommended" list, you can try regular unleaded gas and see how your car performs. But if your car is on the "premium required" list, then use premium fuel only. The bottom line: giving your car "more" than it actually needs is a waste of money.*