



# TALKING ABOUT DRUGS

## DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

People impaired by a drug are not safe drivers because they are not able to concentrate fully and react quickly. This not only risks the driver's safety, but also the safety of their passengers and others on the road.

Driving impaired by a drug is illegal. Being a passenger with someone who is driving impaired by a drug is also very dangerous.

### RISKS WHILE DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

When you drive a vehicle, your brain needs to be alert and focused. Even small amounts of a drug can affect your ability to drive safely. Different drugs act on your brain in different ways, but almost all affect your:

- > motor skills,
- > balance and coordination,
- > attention,
- > judgment,
- > reaction time, and
- > decision-making skills.

Serious accidents can easily happen when you drive while impaired by a drug. Many drivers who have collisions may have both drugs and alcohol in their system. Police can test impaired drivers for alcohol using breathalyzer tests. While no roadside test for drugs is currently available, police across Canada trained as drug recognition experts have the tools and ability to determine if a person is impaired by drugs and/or alcohol.

### DRUGS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO COLLISIONS

Studies of vehicle accidents around the world show that the drugs most commonly implicated in accidents (after alcohol) include:

- > marijuana,
- > opioids,
- > amphetamines,
- > benzodiazepines, and
- > cocaine.

Performance becomes even worse if drivers use both marijuana and alcohol.

Prescription drugs, when used properly or when abused, can also impair driving. Legal drugs, such as opioid pain relievers and benzodiazepines (prescribed for anxiety or sleep disorders) can affect a person's ability to safely control a moving vehicle. People who are prescribed these medications are warned by their pharmacist against operating any machinery, including vehicles, for a certain time after taking them. People who abuse these medications to get high may not even be aware of this danger.

## STATISTICS FOR DRIVING IMPAIRED BY A DRUG

According to the 2012–2013 Canadian Youth Smoking Survey (YSS):

- > One in five (20%) students in grades 7 to 12 reported having ridden in a car driven by someone (including themselves) who was high or had been using alcohol or drugs.

According to the 2012 Canadian Alcohol and Drug Use Monitoring Survey (CADUMS):

- > Almost one in six (15.2%) people between the ages of 15 and 24 reported being a passenger in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had used marijuana in the previous 2 hours.

## TEENS, DRUGS AND DRIVING

Many car crashes involving teenagers are caused by inexperience and poor judgment. When these factors are combined with alcohol, marijuana or other drugs, the results can be tragic.

Parents play a vital role in teaching young people to drive responsibly. That means teaching them not to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs. There is no safe limit for young drivers, since even one drink or a small amount of a drug can affect them. Parents should also offer the following guidance.

- > Discuss how drugs and alcohol can impair driving ability, affect perceptions, and slow reaction times.
- > Remind teens that it is always illegal and dangerous to drive impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- > Discuss the dangers of getting into a car with a driver who has been drinking or using drugs.
- > Make it clear that using alcohol, marijuana or other drugs when driving is dangerous.
- > Model safe driving behaviour by never driving any vehicle impaired.

