

The Truth Youth and Drug-Impaired Driving

Background

Research shows that drugs, including cannabis, can impair one's ability to drive safely and increase the risk of getting into a collision. In fact, cannabis is second only to alcohol as the most commonly detected substance among drivers who die in traffic crashes in Canada. Young people continue to be the largest group of drivers who die in crashes and later test positive for alcohol or drugs.

This pamphlet provides accurate information about the effects of drugs on one's ability to drive safely to help you support young people in making informed decisions about their driving behavior.

Effects of Drugs on Driving

There are many different ways that drugs, both illegal and prescription, can affect one's ability to drive. Below are common categories of drugs found in impaired drivers and their potential effects:

Cannabis

Marijuana, hashish, etc.

Cannabis use affects cognitive and motor abilities. This can result in a reduced ability to divide attention, poor time and space perception, and difficulty concentrating.

Stimulants

Uppers, cocaine, meth, crystal meth, speed, etc.

Stimulants increase wakefulness and alertness. This may result in the inability to focus and divide attention, and an increase in risk-taking.

Opioids

Oxycodone, fentanyl, heroin, pain relievers, etc.

A driver under the effects of opioids may drive slower, weave in and out of lanes, have poor vehicle control and delayed reaction times.

Sedatives

Downers, depressants, sleep aids, etc.

Sedatives are used to cause drowsiness. Effects include slowed reaction time, sleepiness, impaired coordination, reduced ability to divide attention, inattentiveness, increased errors and difficulty following instructions.

Impaired Driving and the Law

Impaired driving, whether caused by drugs (even if prescribed by a doctor), alcohol, or a combination of both, can result in a criminal offence under section 253 of the *Criminal Code of Canada*.

It is illegal to operate any type of motor vehicle while impaired by drugs. This applies to all types of motor vehicles including cars, boats, ATVs and snowmobiles.

Drug Recognition Evaluators are police officers who are specially trained and certified to determine if a person's ability to drive is impaired by drugs.

Many provinces have administrative sanctions in addition to criminal penalties for impaired driving. These can include: fines, licence suspensions, and rehabilitation programs. Check your Provincial/Territorial laws to determine what administrative penalties can be imposed in addition to criminal penalties, for impaired driving where you live.

Prevention

Many actions can be taken to help young people make informed choices to reduce the risks associated with drug-impaired driving:

- Be a positive role model;
- Know the facts! Young people are doing their own research, especially online – not all of what they find is true;
- Talk with youth openly and honestly about the harms, consequences and dangers of drug-impaired driving;
- Provide youth with options to reduce harms associated with drug-impaired driving:
 - Designate a driver;
 - Discuss alternative modes of transportation (public transportation, taxi, friend or family member);
 - Stay the night if possible and safe to do so; and
 - Do not use substances in the vehicle or before driving.
- Encourage youth to drive sober and continue to make healthy life choices that do not involve the use of drugs and other substances.

Resources

- [Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse](#)
- [RCMP Centre for Youth Crime Prevention](#)



In collaboration with:
Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police

