Facts about Drug-Impaired Driving

Drugs increase crash risk

- Drivers who have used marijuana are at an increased risk of getting into a motor vehicle collision. The crash rate of cannabis users is from two to six times more often than drivers who are not impaired, the different rates are due to how much and how often drivers have smoked cannabis (Stewart, 2006; Asbridge et al., 2012).

- Studies of traffic crashes reveal that drivers who test positive for the use of sedatives are up to two to eight times more likely than alcohol- and drug-free drivers to be involved in a fatal traffic crash (Drummer, 1995; Gjerde et al., 2011).

- Drivers who test positive for the use of opioids are up to eight times more likely to be involved in a traffic crash (Mura et al., 2003).

- Drivers who are impaired by cocaine are two to ten times more likely to be involved in a crash (DRUID, 2012).

- Drivers who recently started taking benzodiazepine (e.g., sleep aids or downers) are two to five times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers who are not impaired (Drummer, 1995; Stewart, 2006; Dassanayake et al., 2011).

Marijuana is used more often before driving than any other drug, in some cases exceeding alcohol

- A recent Ontario study revealed that marijuana was the most common illicit drug present among drivers in a fatal motor vehicle collision (Woodall, Chow, Lauwers, & Cass, 2015).

- Data from a recent roadside survey in Ontario revealed that marijuana was the most common illegal drug present among young drivers (Beirness, Beasley, & McClafferty, 2015).

- More young drivers in Ontario drive after using marijuana than after drinking alcohol (Boak, Hamilton, Adlaf, & Mann, 2015).

- In 2011, 12.6% of young Canadians aged 15–24 admitted to driving after taking marijuana but 10.7% reported driving after drinking (Health Canada, 2012).

Youth are driving after they use drugs and riding with impaired drivers

- In Ontario 17% of drivers in grades 10 to 12 reported that within the past 12 months they had driven within one hour of using cannabis at least once (Paglia-Boak, Mann, Adlaf, & Rehm, 2009).
- Between 2008 and 2010, surveys of nighttime drivers in British Columbia found that among drivers aged 16–24:
    - 1.1% tested positive for opioids;
    - 3.6% tested positive for cocaine, amphetamine or methamphetamine; and
    - 6.4% tested positive for cannabis.
- In 2011, 21% of high school students who were surveyed said they had driven at least once within an hour of using drugs. When they were asked if they had ever been a passenger in a vehicle in which the driver had used drugs, 50% answered yes (Young et al., 2011).
- Riding with a driver who has used drugs or alcohol can lead to consequences just as tragic as driving while impaired.

A number of drivers who died in crashes had drugs in their system

- Overall, among all drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes in Canada between 2000 and 2010:
    - 5.5% tested positive for opioids;
    - 8.5% tested positive for stimulants;
    - 11.2% tested positive for sedatives; and
    - 16.4% tested positive for cannabis.
- In 2010, nearly as many drivers died in road crashes after using drugs (34.2%) as those who had been drinking (39.1%).

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