

## WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Would you feel comfortable getting behind the wheel of a car that had no brakes or flat tires? Probably not – because it wouldn't be safe to drive that car. But if you get behind the wheel after you've smoked marijuana, it is just as risky as driving a car that's missing parts or not working properly. You're putting yourself and others at risk.

Marijuana is a commonly used drug because so many people think that it is harmless. These people also think that using marijuana doesn't affect their ability to drive. And even worse, some individuals believe that marijuana makes them safer drivers. That belief couldn't be further from the truth. Driving while high is just as treacherous, and just as illegal, as driving while drunk.



## THE FACTS

- **11.7 million people reported driving under the influence of illicit drugs over the course of a year.**
- **The rate of driving under the influence of illicit drugs is highest among young adults.**
- **Marijuana is the most commonly detected illicit substance in fatal car accidents.**
- **25% of injured or killed drivers test positive for marijuana.**
- **Marijuana use doubles the risk of car crashes.**
- **The higher the THC concentrations are in a person's body, the higher the risk for a car crash.**

**THC affects motor skills, coordination, concentration, attention, and judgment, all of which are crucial to safe driving.**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

To know more about marijuana and driving go to:

**Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

[www.cdc.gov/cannabis/risk-factors/driving.html](http://www.cdc.gov/cannabis/risk-factors/driving.html)

**National Institute on Drug Abuse**

[nida.nih.gov](http://nida.nih.gov)

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# MARIJUANA & DRIVING

*doped up and dangerous*







## HOW MARIJUANA IMPAIRS DRIVING

When marijuana is smoked, the active ingredient, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), gets into the bloodstream rapidly. It travels to the brain where it affects the chemical balance. This change is what makes users feel high. Users report feeling euphoria, distortions in the perception of time, and an altered state of consciousness. THC also affects motor skills, coordination, concentration, reasoning abilities, attention, and judgment, all of which are crucial to safe driving.

Drivers who have smoked marijuana show delayed responses to stimuli. They are unable to react in a timely manner to red lights, stop signs, other cars, or pedestrians. Marijuana impairs a driver's ability to judge distances. This means that they will be more likely to follow other vehicles too closely and less likely to apply the brakes appropriately.

Impaired drivers have difficulty maintaining their speed and lane position. This poses a large risk to other drivers and increases the likelihood that an impaired driver will damage private property or strike pedestrians. Marijuana also makes it more difficult to focus on driving and the road, again raising the risk of a crash.

The effects of marijuana can take hours to wear off. Even if a person thinks that they're not "high" anymore, their skills and judgment may still be impaired. And because THC stays in the body for weeks, and sometimes longer, a blood test taken after a car crash may show that the driver was under the influence – even if that person hasn't used recently.

## MIXING MARIJUANA AND ALCOHOL

Many drivers who cause accidents are found to have both drugs and alcohol in their system. This combination is especially deadly. Studies suggest that having alcohol in your system enables faster absorption of THC. This can result in the marijuana having a much stronger effect than it normally would. Other unpredictable effects may also occur, including nausea, vomiting, panic attacks, extreme paranoia, and anxiety.

Alcohol and marijuana affect the brain in different ways. Individuals who choose to drink alcohol and smoke marijuana will find themselves extremely debilitated. Even in small doses, this mix causes significant impairment

and raises the risk of a car crash. By being both high and drunk, these drivers pose a very real threat to themselves, their passengers, other drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

## EVEN IF MARIJUANA IS LEGAL, IT'S STILL ILLEGAL TO DRIVE IMPAIRED

Medical and even recreational marijuana is legal in a number of states across the country. But its legality doesn't change the fact that driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal. States with legal recreational marijuana have established a standard THC blood content level to qualify individuals as driving under the influence of drugs. The current precedents state that drivers are not allowed to have a THC blood content of over five nanograms per milliliter.



Presently, there is no clear consensus on how much marijuana it takes to reach a blood content of five nanograms per milliliter. The THC blood content can vary with the type of marijuana used, how much has been consumed, and a person's specific body chemistry. Heavy marijuana users might have a THC blood content that's always over the legal limit. Even the occasional user may find that their THC blood content is over the legal limit several hours after they have smoked. With all that in mind, it's best not to risk it at all.

## DON'T DEAL WITH DEADLY DRIVERS

Speak up if someone who has smoked marijuana is about to drive. Ask them to let a sober individual do the driving. Take their keys away if you have to. You could be saving their life and the lives of others.

If you've smoked marijuana, make the right choice and don't get behind the wheel! Even better, don't use marijuana at all. Your future is at stake when you smoke marijuana.

**Marijuana use *DOUBLES* the risk of car crashes.**

