

## WHAT MAKES IT DANGEROUS?

The use of cannabis can make driving a vehicle unsafe and puts yourself and others at risk. It is important to understand the risks associated with driving under the influence of cannabis.

The active ingredient in cannabis causing impairment is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC acts on specific cannabinoid receptors found in body tissue and organs, especially in the brain and nervous system. These receptors are involved in regulating body functions such as brain and nervous system activity, heart rate and blood pressure, wake/sleep cycles, and stress.



## HOW LONG DO THE EFFECTS LAST?

The effects of cannabis are complex and vary among individuals. Each cannabis strain can have different amounts and types of psychoactive compounds; and how they are consumed changes the onset, intensity and duration of the effects. For example:

- By smoking or vaporizing, the effects are felt within minutes and can last two to three hours
- By ingesting oils or edibles, the effects are felt within 30 minutes to three hours, and can last four to six hours or longer

People with lower tolerances may experience the effects of THC for longer periods.

**FAST FACT:**  
Cannabis affects your ability to react to unexpected events

## IS THERE A SAFE AMOUNT TO CONSUME BEFORE DRIVING?

It is difficult to reliably establish how much cannabis can be consumed before it is unsafe to drive.

Having THC in your system affects these key safe-driving skills:

- Reaction time
- Visual function
- Concentration
- Speed
- Coordination
- Following distance

By consuming cannabis, a person is under the influence and at risk for impairment, whether they feel the effects or not.

**FAST FACT:**  
Drug-impaired driving is dangerous and against the law

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

According to Statistics Canada, many believe there is little risk associated with cannabis and driving:

- **50%** – the number of cannabis users who don't think it affects their driving
- **44%** – people who think they can drive safely when under the influence of cannabis
- **25%** – users who believe the impacts of cannabis consumption are less detrimental to driving than alcohol
- **1 in 5** – users who believe there is no negative effect at all

Statistics for young drivers suggest they hold similar beliefs that driving under the influence of cannabis has little risk:

- **19 to 24** – the age range of youth who believe two hours or less is a reasonable period to wait to drive after using cannabis
- **22%** – youth who admit to using cannabis and driving while impaired, believing it is not dangerous
- **1 in 3** – number of youth who have been a passenger with a cannabis-impaired driver

### FAST FACT:

Combining cannabis use with alcohol can greatly magnify the effects of cannabis

## THE REALITY

Public Safety Canada conducted research on cannabis-impaired driving in 2017 and discovered:

- Cannabis-impaired driving doubles your chances of being in a crash
- 49% of fatally-injured drivers in Canada had cannabis in their systems
- One in four cannabis users have reported driving under the influence
- One in three of those who have used cannabis in the past year have driven within two hours of consuming

## RISK AVOIDANCE

The key to reducing cannabis-impaired driving incidents is to increase awareness of the risks. Remember:

- Informed drivers can make safer decisions
- Do not use drugs if you plan to drive
- Have a designated driver
- Call a cab or ride-share service
- Stay over and sleep it off
- Keep yourself and others out of harm's way

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [An overview of Marijuana & the Safety Sensitive Worker](#), Dr. Brendan Adams
- [Marijuana Use Among Drivers in Canada](#), Traffic Injury Research Foundation, December 2017
- [Public Opinion Research on Drug-Impaired Driving](#), EKOS Research Associates Inc., 2017
- [Government of Canada Campaign](#), Don't Drive High