CDC Cannabis and Public Health

Cannabis and Driving

For Everyone
FEBRUARY 22, 2024 •

KEY POINTS

- Driving under the influence (DUI) laws are not just for alcohol. Driving under the influence of drugs, including cannabis, is also dangerous and illegal.

- Driving is a complex task that requires your full attention to stay safe and alert.

What you need to know about cannabis use and driving

Cannabis affects areas of the brain that control your body's movements, balance, coordination, memory, and judgment. [1] [2] Cannabis use can impair important skills required for safe driving by: [1] [2]

- slowing your reaction time and ability to make decisions,

- impairing coordination, and

- distorting perception.

Studies have shown an association between acute cannabis use and car crashes, but more research is needed. [1] [2] It is difficult to connect the presence of cannabis or concentration of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the compound responsible for cannabis's psychoactive properties (the "high"), to impairment in driving performance for an individual person. [2] Studies have shown that the use of multiple substances (such as cannabis and alcohol) at the same time can increase impairment. [3]

Fast facts

- Cannabis is the most commonly used drug that is illegal at the federal level in the United States. [4]

- In 2021, an estimated 52.5 million people used cannabis in the past year. [5]

- After alcohol, cannabis is the substance most often associated with impaired driving. [6]

- In 2017, about 1 in 8 high school drivers reported driving after using cannabis at least once during the past month. [4]

What you can do to prevent impaired driving

If you intend to drive, the safest option is not to use any alcohol or drugs, including cannabis. Here are steps you can take to help prevent impaired driving if you plan to use, are using, or have used alcohol or drugs, including cannabis:

- Choose not to drive and remind your friends and family to do the same.

- Assign a trusted designated driver who will not drink or use drugs when you are going out with a group of people you know.

- Plan on getting a ride home from someone who has not been drinking alcohol and/or using drugs, using a rideshare service, or calling a taxi.

Resources

- CDC's Impaired Driving

- CDC's Cannabis and Public Health

REFERENCES

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