



Canadian Centre  
on Substance Abuse  
Centre canadien de lutte  
contre les toxicomanies

Partnership. Knowledge. Change.  
Collaboration. Connaissance. Changement.



## Drug-Impaired Driving in Canada Educator Toolkit

# Drug-Impaired Driving Backgrounder

## Why did we develop this resource?

Studies have found that the problem of driving while impaired by drugs has become comparable in seriousness to alcohol-impaired driving. In Canada, there has been an increase in the number of drivers who test positive for substances other than alcohol: a 2010 roadside survey in British Columbia of 2,840 randomly selected vehicles found that 7.2% of drivers tested positive for drugs and 9.9% had alcohol in their system.<sup>1</sup> One area of particular concern is the prevalence of driving after drug use among young drivers.

Many types of illegal and prescription drugs can impair a person's ability to drive. Such effects can include reduced ability to divide attention, poor time and space management, and reduced ability to allocate concentration. These effects can increase the crash risk by up to eight times. Such crashes sometimes result in death.

The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA) wanted to understand better the type of information youth receive about impaired driving. The CCSA reviewed all online accessible Canadian driver education materials, including handbooks, websites, handouts, workbooks.<sup>2</sup> Our review of this material sought to determine the availability of information related to driving while impaired by drugs. Most of the reviewed materials lacked important information about the effects of drugs on driving that could assist new and young drivers in making safer driving decisions. This important information included the effects of different types of drugs on the body and driving, as well as the ability of law enforcement to detect drug-impaired drivers and take corresponding legal action.

Given the lack of information, CCSA developed a toolkit for educators to provide new and young drivers with information they need to make informed driving decisions.

## What is its purpose?

This toolkit aims to:

- Provide educators with the necessary information needed to increase awareness of the effects of drugs on one's ability to safely drive; and
- Inform interventions aimed at young drivers to help them reduce the harms associated with driving while impaired by drugs.

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<sup>1</sup> Beirness, D.J., & Beasley, E.E. (2011). *Alcohol and drug use among drivers: British Columbia Roadside Survey 2010*. Ottawa, Ont.: Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse.

<sup>2</sup> Materials that were not available online or required purchase were excluded.



## How did we develop it?

CCSA researchers conducted a review of online accessible Canadian driver education materials containing information on impaired driving. They then consulted with various provincial and territorial licensing agencies to determine educators' needs when it comes to raising awareness of the harms associated with impaired driving.

## How can I learn more?

Check out our new toolkit and some of the other following resources:

- [Opioids, Driving and Implications for Youth](#)
- [Sedatives, Driving and Implications for Youth](#)
- [Stimulants, Driving and Implications for Youth](#)
- [Cannabis, Driving and Implications for Youth](#)
- [Clearing the Smoke on Cannabis: Cannabis Use and Driving](#)
- [The Problem of Youth Drugged Driving and Approaches to Prevention](#)
- [The Characteristics of Youth Passengers of Impaired Drivers](#)

Have questions or suggestions? Email [info@ccsa.ca](mailto:info@ccsa.ca). Join the conversation on Twitter to help create a healthier society, free of the harms of substance abuse, by following @CCSACanada.

