



## Cannabis and Driving

Take the wheel or take a toke,  
but not both.



Association des intervenants en  
toxicomanie du Québec inc.



Written and published by the  
Association des intervenants en toxicomanie du Québec inc.  
[www.aitq.com](http://www.aitq.com)

Graphics  
Versicolore graphic design

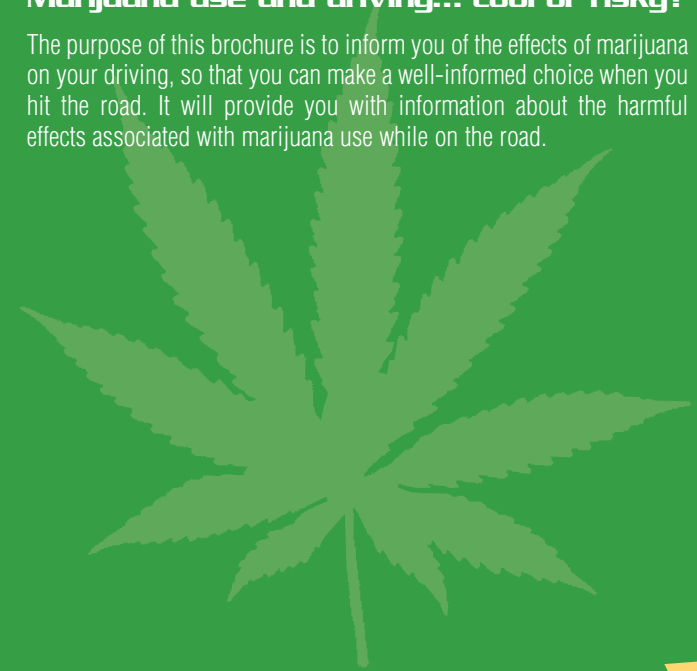
#### Acknowledgments

The AITQ thanks Michel Dubé, addiction counselor, Mylène Legault, student, Jacques Bergeron and Mohamed Ben Amar of the Université de Montréal, and Luce Marineau and Sylvie Tremblay of the Société d'assurance automobile du Québec, for their participation in the advisory committee, their collaboration and their astute comments.

Financial support provided by the Drug Strategy and Controlled Substances Programme  
Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund, Health Canada  
The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the official position of Health Canada.

## Marijuana use and driving... cool or risky?

The purpose of this brochure is to inform you of the effects of marijuana on your driving, so that you can make a well-informed choice when you hit the road. It will provide you with information about the harmful effects associated with marijuana use while on the road.



## Marijuana and Driving

# The Marijuana and Driving Quiz

In order to help you increase your knowledge about the effects of marijuana on your driving, we have created a quiz for you. So test your knowledge by answering TRUE or FALSE to the following statements.

## Quiz

- 1 Drivers under the influence of marijuana tend to increase their speed.  
**TRUE FALSE**
- 2 It is hard to drive in a straight line while under the influence of marijuana.  
**TRUE FALSE**
- 3 Drivers under the influence of marijuana are less aware of being intoxicated than drivers under the influence of alcohol.  
**TRUE FALSE**
- 4 You shouldn't drive when you have used marijuana, no matter how much you have used.  
**TRUE FALSE**
- 5 Driving with impaired faculties due to marijuana is a criminal offence.  
**TRUE FALSE**

6

The decriminalization of marijuana will reduce the penalties for driving a vehicle while under the influence of marijuana.

TRUE FALSE

7

Marijuana is the second most consumed illegal substance in Québec.

TRUE FALSE

8

In Québec, alcohol and marijuana are the two most frequent substances found in dead drivers.

TRUE FALSE

9

Being under the influence of marijuana and alcohol substantially increases the risk of being involved in a road accident.

TRUE FALSE

10

Alternatives to driving while under the influence of alcohol, such as taxis, designated drivers or volunteer driving services, can be used for marijuana too.

TRUE FALSE

See answers on page 11

### Impaired faculties and driving: what's new?

Driving with impaired faculties is mainly associated with alcohol, but many other factors can affect your ability to drive, such as **drowsiness**, **medication** and **illegal substances**, including **marijuana**.



## The effects of marijuana on your driving

Does marijuana really affect your driving?

This is a question that marijuana users, their friends and other drivers ask themselves.

YES, the effects of marijuana on driving are very real. Here is how a driver's faculties are impaired:

- Difficulty in concentrating and staying attentive to the road environment
- Risk of being less aware of your environment
- Affected coordination
- Difficulty in maintaining a straight trajectory
- Difficulty in driving at a steady speed and judging distances
- Longer reaction time, slower reflexes and tentative driving
- Risk of not being able to handle an unexpected situation

Aware of being high, drivers slow down, pass other cars less and keep a greater distance between vehicles. However, they are hardly aware of the risks associated with their driving while under the influence of marijuana.

## Is there a safe limit for marijuana use?

There is no safe limit for marijuana use while driving an automobile, since even a low level of THC – the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana – can impair your faculties. That is why you should not drive when you have used marijuana.

## Are the effects of marijuana the same from one person to another?

The effects of marijuana vary from one person to another. Several factors influence the effect of marijuana on the body, such as drowsiness, stress, physical health, the quantity used, the composition of the marijuana (its level of active THC) and its simultaneous use with other substances. In addition, someone who consumes marijuana regularly and develops a tolerance to it can still experience impaired faculties while driving. So no one is safe from the risks associated with driving while under its influence. Only time allows you to regain your faculties. Coffee, showers and fresh air have no effect.

## Marijuana-alcohol association

Simultaneous use of marijuana and alcohol considerably increases the risk of being in a fatal accident because the negative effects of marijuana and alcohol combine. The combination of substances (alcohol, illegal substances and medication) is explosive and unsuitable for driving.

## Share the road, not the risk

Have you ever thought about the fact that the person who chooses to drive with impaired faculties causes everyone else on the road, passengers included, to risk their lives? Driving is a privilege, and a responsible driver ensures their own safety as well as that of their passengers and others on the road.

*Driving is not like in the movies,  
you have just one life...*



## Answers to the quiz

### 1 FALSE

Drivers under the influence of marijuana usually drive slower. However, their reaction time is longer, their reflexes slower, they drive more tentatively and they may not be able to handle unexpected situations.

### 2 TRUE

Marijuana actually has an affect on your trajectory, just like drowsiness and certain substances that affect the human brain.

### 3 FALSE

Drivers under the influence of marijuana are usually more aware of being intoxicated than drivers under the influence of alcohol. So their behavior is less risky than drivers under the influence of alcohol

(speed, passing, distance between vehicles). This factor contributes to the fact that the risks associated with driving under the influence of marijuana are often underestimated.

### 4 TRUE

You shouldn't drive when you have used marijuana because it is impossible to determine a safe use limit. Even a low level of THC – the main psychoactive ingredient in marijuana – can impair your faculties. As a rule, the greater the quantity you use, the more affected your driving is.

## 5 TRUE

According to the Criminal Code of Canada, driving while under the influence of a drug, including marijuana, is punishable just like driving under the influence of alcohol.

## 6 FALSE

The decriminalization of marijuana will not change the penalties for driving while under its influence. The decriminalization of marijuana is mainly intended to replace criminal sanctions with fines in the case of possession of small quantities of marijuana.

## 7 FALSE

Marijuana is by far the most consumed illegal substance in Québec.

## 8 TRUE

Recent data indicate that alcohol and marijuana are in fact the two most frequently found substances in dead drivers in Québec.

## 9 TRUE

Any combination of substances (alcohol, illegal substances or medication) is explosive and unsuitable for driving. Combining substances substantially increases the risk of fatal road accidents, more than if each substance was taken separately.

## 10 TRUE

All alternatives recommended for alcohol can be used to prevent driving under the influence of marijuana.

## Alternatives to driving under the influence of marijuana

Perhaps you already know that there are alternatives to driving with impaired faculties and that the best one is still to arrange your travel plans before you leave. For example, you can use a designated driver, take a taxi, use a driving service or stay overnight at your location. Although these suggested solutions may be hard to apply, you can always not use marijuana and be your own designated driver.

## Your friends' role

Now that you are aware of the effects of marijuana on your driving, you can try and dissuade your friends and acquaintances from driving when they have used it. If you are a passenger, you should never get into a vehicle with a driver who has impaired faculties.



*Road safety  
is everyone's concern.*

# Facts and figures

## About driving with impaired faculties

- 16-24 year-olds are overrepresented in accidents involving impaired faculties.
- In the 25 and younger age group, **one** out of **five** men has already driven while under the influence of marijuana.
- According to recent statistics, alcohol and marijuana are the two most frequently found substances in dead drivers in Québec. The presence of marijuana has been found in the urine of **one** out of **five** dead drivers while alcohol was present in the blood of **two** out of **five** dead drivers.
- Just like alcohol, driving while under the influence of a drug leads to penalties under the Criminal Code of Canada.

## About marijuana

- Marijuana is the most consumed illegal substance in Québec
- At the end of secondary school, half of all students have already tried marijuana.
- Marijuana use has almost doubled in ten years in Québec.

## About driving

- 16-24 year-olds are overrepresented in road accidents. So while they hold 11% of the driver's licenses, they are responsible for 23% of the road accidents resulting in bodily harm.
- Between 80 and 90% of all road accidents are due to a human error that could have been prevented.



**Questions/notes :**

**For more information, you can contact  
Drugs: assistance and reference**

**Montreal and surrounding areas: (514) 527-2626  
Toll-free: 1 800 265-2626**