



How drugs affect drivers*

In general, drugs have the following effects on drivers.

- Slower reaction times
- Poor concentration
- Sleepiness and fatigue
- Confused thinking
- Distorted perception (not seeing things as they really appear)
- Over confidence, leading to unnecessary risks
- Reduced co-ordination
- Erratic behaviour
- Nausea
- Hallucinations
- Blurred vision and enlarged pupils
- Aggression
- Panic attacks and paranoia
- Tremors
- Dizziness
- Cramps

Working To Save Lives



Udaras Um Shabhailteacht Ar Bhoithre
Road Safety Authority

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RSA



DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS

Udaras Um Shabhailteacht Ar Bhoithre
Road Safety Authority



Driving Under the Influence of Drugs

Driving under the influence of drugs is just as dangerous as driving under the influence of alcohol. It's also against the law.

Drugs – whether they are prescribed or over the counter medicines or illegal substances – can affect your mind and body in ways that make it unsafe for you to drive. Not only that, the effects can last for hours or even days. For example, cannabis shows in urine for up to four weeks after a person takes it.

Drug-drivers usually think they are better drivers while under the influence of some drugs.

They also:

- think they are less likely to have a crash compared with drink drivers,
- overestimate their ability to make up for any reduced judgement or reaction times, and
- appear to know little about the effects of driving under the influence of drugs.

Effects of specific drugs*

Cannabis

Cannabis interferes with your ability or willingness to pay attention, making it extremely dangerous to drive.

Because it makes you more distracted and reduces your motor skills (how easily you move your arms or legs), you are less able to carry out complex tasks such as driving.

In the United States, research with teenagers has shown that they were **three times** more likely to be involved in a road traffic accident if they were cannabis smokers than if they were non-smokers.

A cannabis smoker feels the initial effects after eight or nine seconds. These effects reach a peak after 10 to 15 minutes, but impairment can last for several hours. Cannabis can also be detected in the body for several weeks after it is taken.

Heroin

Heroin provides a feeling of euphoria and relief of all pain, but in doing so it slows your reflexes and harms your hand/eye co-ordination.

Drivers on heroin will not be able to see properly, concentrate on the road or react quickly enough to avoid a crash.

Cocaine

Cocaine can make you feel extremely confident, strong and intelligent, but because of this it also seriously harms your judgement.

It is a stimulant, so users are likely to be hyperactive, unable to stand still or judge time and distance accurately.

Ecstasy

Ecstasy is a hallucinogen and a stimulant. As a result, it exaggerates all emotions.

When someone on ecstasy hears a sound, they may believe they can see or smell something that isn't there. The pupils of their eyes will appear dilated and they will be dazed and lacking in co-ordination. Ecstasy will also affect their balance and judgement of time and distance.

*Source: Thames Valley Police, London, UK

For further information on the effects of drugs on driving, see www.rsa.ie



Driven by a drug driver?

Our research on the use of illegal drugs while driving among 17 to 34 year olds has highlighted alarming behaviour. More than 1 in 5 people (22%) admitted they were a passenger in a car that was driven by someone under the influence of drugs.

You wouldn't drive or get into a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol, so why would you drive or be driven by someone who has taken drugs?

The law

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 1978 makes it an offence to drive a car, motor bike, truck, pedal bike or an animal drawn vehicle while 'under the influence of an intoxicant to such an extent as to be incapable of having control of the vehicle'.

Intoxicants include alcohol and drugs, whether taken separately or together. The word 'drugs' here includes legal prescribed and over the counter (OTC) medicines.

The Road Traffic Bill 2009 will give An Garda Síochána new powers to carry out Preliminary Impairment Tests to help them decide whether a driver is under the influence of an intoxicant, including drugs.

