

## SETH'S STORY

Seth was what many of his teachers and classmates called an "outsider." He didn't have a lot of friends his own age, so he hung out with older "potheads" who had already flunked out of high school. Seth, like so many of his classmates, knew how bad marijuana could be, but he desperately wanted friends to hang out with. At first, he started smoking weed just to feel some kind of acceptance. However, after smoking marijuana for a few months, he started to feel like he couldn't cope without it.

One night, after smoking a couple of joints with the older guys, one of the guys in their group said he had the munchies. "Go pick up a pizza, Seth. We'll all pay you back." Seth knew they probably wouldn't, but he went to the store anyway. He was definitely high, but he thought he was ok to drive. "I'll just make sure I go extra slow and focus really hard," Seth thought to himself. As he pulled up to a traffic light, it was green. Still, Seth slowed to a stop because he was paranoid that it would turn to red on him. Set sat through a whole cycle, too stoned to move. Finally, another car drove up behind him and started flashing his lights and honking his horn. Panicking, Seth floored it through the intersection, but by that time, the light had turned red and he plowed into the side of a truck. Seth was lucky to only have a few scrapes from the wreck, but the driver of the other vehicle was killed on impact. When the police got there, they could smell the odor of marijuana on his clothes. Seth was arrested and booked with a DUI. He later served 10 years in jail and will have to live forever with the guilt of taking someone's life.



## THE TRUTH ABOUT MARIJUANA

What do you know about smoking marijuana and driving? Test yourself here.

1. As long as you drive carefully, driving while under the influence of marijuana is okay.  
a. True                      b. False
2. Motor coordination, reaction time, visual function and judgment are all affected by smoking marijuana.  
a. True                      b. False
3. The risk of being involved in a car accident roughly doubles after marijuana use.  
a. True                      b. False
4. What is the main chemical component of marijuana?  
a. Carbon dioxide        b. Oxygen  
c. THC                      d. Acetic acid
5. Drinking alcohol while smoking marijuana will make you feel more sober.  
a. True                      b. False

Answers: 1. b; 2. a; 3. a; 4. c; 5. b

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# MARIJUANA EFFECTS ON DRIVING



## TRAVELING WITH THC



## IT'S A BIG DEAL

### Driving High and the Law

Even though marijuana is legal for recreational purposes in states like Colorado and Washington, that does not mean it is safe to use and definitely not safe to drive while under the influence. Driving under the influence of any drug, even if it's a prescription, is illegal and can land you in jail with a DUI on your record. Police officers are trained to detect impaired drivers on the highway. If a police officer pulls you over for driving and you refuse to take a chemical test, you could face losing your license or worse. In many states, you can go to jail if any amount of THC is found in your system, and since THC can stay in your body for hours or even days, you could potentially get a DUI and jail time for a bit of marijuana that you smoked the day before.

Marijuana comes in second as the most frequently found illicit drug in drivers who had been involved in accidents, including fatal ones. The risk of being involved in an accident roughly doubles after smoking marijuana, and that risk is even higher for teenagers due to them being inexperienced drivers. If it is proven that driving while under the influence of marijuana caused the death of a passenger or someone else on the road, you could be charged with vehicular manslaughter and go to prison. Maximum penalties range from state to state, but no matter what, it's not worth the risk. Do you really want to be responsible for injuring or killing someone?



## DEADLY COMBINATIONS

People who smoke marijuana and have high amounts of THC in their blood are three to seven times more likely to be responsible for a car accident than drivers who are completely sober. Since many people, especially teens, make the mistake of mixing alcohol with marijuana, that probability of being responsible for an accident is even greater.

Smoking marijuana while drinking can also increase the way your body absorbs THC, which makes the high feel more intense. Likewise, THC can delay the peak of alcoholic impairment, which means it can take longer for a person using both substances to feel drunk. It is very serious to note, however, that feeling drunk and being drunk are not the same thing. You could potentially feel fine when you get behind the wheel of a car, but be way over the legal limit, putting yourself and others in danger.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### Preventing Friends from Driving High

The best way to prevent someone from driving while high is obvious; don't smoke marijuana at all. If you're in a situation where a friend is high and wants to drive home, here are some tips on how to stop them.

- If you can, take away their keys.
- Don't start an argument.
- Suggest an alternate form of transportation—a cab, someone who hasn't been smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol, or even public transportation.
- Explain that you don't want them to drive because you care about them, and you don't want them hurting themselves or anyone else.
- Get another sober friend to help you or to act as moral support. It's usually harder to say "no" to two or three people than one person.

## DRIVING HIGH

Like alcohol, marijuana impairs important skills that are necessary for driving. Multiple studies have found there is a strong relationship between a high blood level of THC—the main component in marijuana—and impaired driving ability.

Users of marijuana can display impaired judgement of time and distance, decreased motor coordination, diminished visual function (or tunnel vision), slower reaction time and an inability to focus on multiple things at once. When driving, all of these skills are vital to keep yourself, your passengers and other drivers safe. Since marijuana is a psychoactive drug, it ultimately affects your brain—which controls all of these different skills.

## DON'T BE STUPID

### Don't be a Statistic

- Other than alcohol, marijuana is the most commonly found drug in drivers who have been involved in a car crash.
- Car accidents are already a leading cause of death in people aged 16 to 19 years old. Why would you want to raise those risks by smoking pot?
- Drivers who have THC in their systems are twice as likely to be responsible for a deadly crash than a driver with no marijuana, alcohol, or any other drugs in their systems.
- In 2011, researchers found through surveying middle and high school students that 12% of high school seniors had driven after using marijuana sometime in the two weeks before completing the survey.

