

Impaired Driving

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- students will be able to describe how effects of alcohol and cannabis could contribute to accidents by impairing driving skills

CONTENT AND TIME (30-MINUTE LESSON)

7.1 Introduction: Impaired Driving (20 minutes)

7.2 Activity (10 minutes)

REQUIRED MATERIALS

HANDOUT 7.1: Summary of alcohol and cannabis facts

HANDOUT 7.2: Alcohol amounts

7.1 Introduction: Impaired Driving

(20 minutes)

Alcohol and cannabis are two of the most common substances used by adolescents. This may be because both substances are legally available for adults, making them easier to access and more socially acceptable than other substances. Although many adults do not condone the use of alcohol and cannabis by youth under 18, they may accept that some experimentation has become a norm, particularly for older youth.

Along with the issue of adolescent substance use, comes the issue of adolescent impaired driving.

Some points to consider are:

- By grade 9, adolescents may be experimenting with substance use, especially on weekends.
- Teens are struggling with issues of peer acceptance, boredom, rebellion, self-esteem, individuality, status, a desire to be more like adults, curiosity, and much more. These issues affect how young people make decisions in their lives.
- Like all children, adolescents model the adult behaviour that they see. Sometimes the people they are imitating send them contradictory messages about driving while impaired. An adult may drink and drive, yet tell their son or daughter not to. Teens don't know which message to believe.
- Teens are also influenced by the behaviour of their peers. Being “true to yourself” can be very difficult for a teen. Teens need to develop skills to be able to make the right decisions.

7.2 Activity

(10 minutes)

Inform your group that this exercise will examine the effects of alcohol and cannabis and show how using these substances results in impairment of driving skills.

Make two columns on the board: one for alcohol and one for cannabis. Briefly discuss some examples and list them under the appropriate substance (e.g., increased time needed to make a decision may mean you do not apply the brakes quickly enough).

Review the effects that alcohol and cannabis could have on a person using HANDOUT 7.1, Summary of alcohol and cannabis facts, and ask your group how these effects might impact a person's driving skills.

Relating the cause of accidents to use of alcohol and cannabis

Check the exercise by comparing and discussing answers, with emphasis on the effects. Which effects would be most likely to cause an accident if the driver had been drinking alcohol? What about using cannabis?

DEBRIEF

- What steps can a person take to make sure they are not under pressure to drive after using substances like alcohol and cannabis?
- What can you do if someone who has been using substances offers you a ride?

Summary of Alcohol and Cannabis Facts

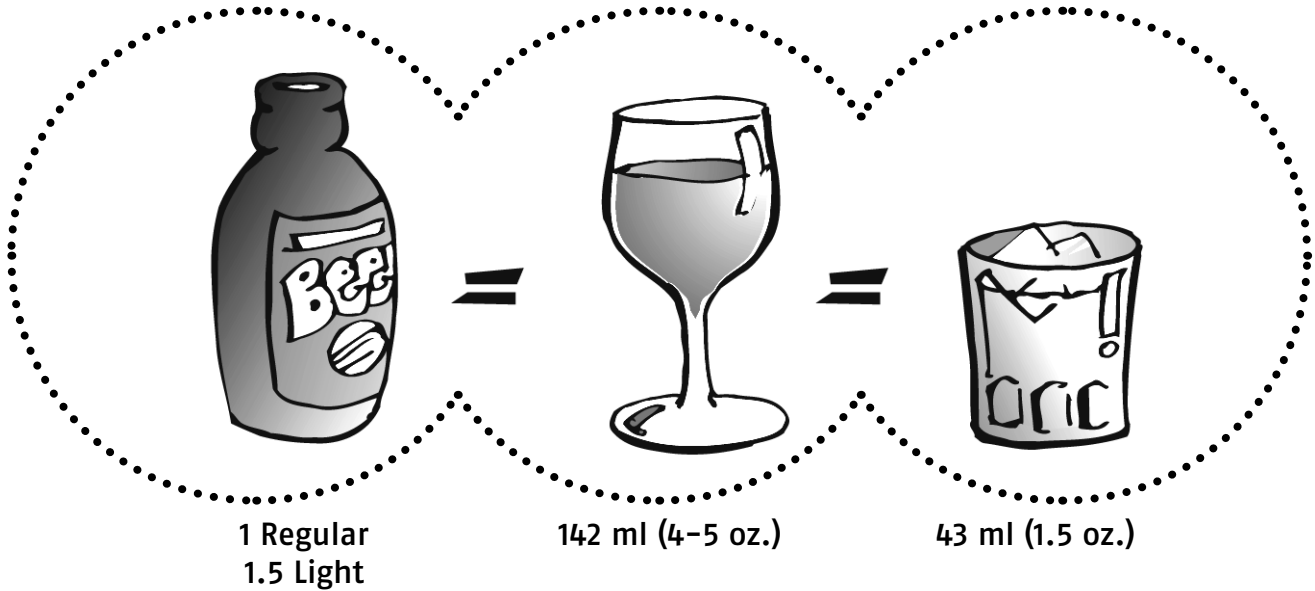
Alcohol

1. Alcohol is a depressant.
2. Alcohol is broken down by the liver at a set rate, which cannot be changed (drinking coffee or having a cold shower will not help you sober up).
3. Alcohol passes more slowly into the blood stream if there is food in the stomach.
4. Alcohol impairs your judgement and makes you less able to make responsible decisions.
5. Alcohol is likely to make you less cautious.
6. Alcohol affects vision by decreasing peripheral (side) vision, frontal vision, and ability to focus, ability to recover from glare, number and speed of scans, depth perception, and colour sensitivity.
7. Alcohol decreases a person's ability to react and reactions may be exaggerated.
8. Alcohol may make you less patient.
9. Alcohol impairs muscle coordination.
10. Alcohol makes your body less alert.
11. Alcohol impairs hearing, sense of touch, and memory.
12. Alcohol may give you false confidence.
13. Alcohol may make you more aggressive.
14. Alcohol interacts with other drugs and this can increase impairment.
15. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of alcohol-related deaths.
16. People who abuse alcohol tend to be at higher risk for injury, suicide, and long-term illness.
17. In Alberta, one in five drivers involved in fatal collisions has consumed alcohol.
18. It is a criminal offence to operate, or be in care or control of, a motor vehicle while your ability is impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

Cannabis

1. Cannabis can cause drowsiness, slower reaction times, and reduce your ability to pay attention.
2. Cannabis can negatively affect your balance and coordination.
3. Cannabis impairs your thinking, concentration, memory and ability to make decisions.
4. Cannabis can impair each person differently and depends on how it was consumed (e.g., smoked, ingested), how much was taken, and the type and strength of the product.
5. Cannabis with high levels of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) can cause anxiety, paranoia and panic.
6. For some people, cannabis use can lead to a psychotic episode (not being able to tell what is real, disorganized thoughts and, in some cases, hallucinations).
7. Cannabis that contains higher levels of the chemical CBD (cannabidiol) may help reduce some of the negative effects of THC.
8. Cannabis smoke contains many of the same harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke.
9. When eating or drinking cannabis, it can take several hours to feel the full effects and these effects can last a long time.
10. Young people are at greater risk of harms from cannabis because the brain is still developing.
11. Frequent, long-term cannabis use can lead to dependence and addiction.
12. Consuming too much cannabis can cause symptoms of cannabis poisoning which can include rapid heartbeat, chest pain, nausea/vomiting, anxiety or paranoia, psychosis (not being able to tell what is real) and difficulty breathing.
13. Combining cannabis with other substances can increase your level of impairment and the risk of adverse effects.
14. Police officers are trained to determine if you are under the influence of a drug and can charge you with impaired driving.
15. Driving while impaired by cannabis is illegal and can result in license suspension, fines, criminal charges and even jail time.

Alcohol Amounts



**No matter what you drink,
it's all the same to your body.**