

Please note that the driving school instructor may use a different presentation to teach this module.



## Module 10

### Alcohol and Drugs

# Outline of Module 10

- Activity: Consequences for the Driver and for Others
- Responsible Strategies
- Impaired? Don't Drive!
- What Happens to Alcohol in the Body
- Effects of Alcohol and Drugs on Driving
- Alcohol, Drugs and the Road Safety Record
- Legal, Financial, Social and Family Consequences

# Targeted Competencies

- Identifying the factors that increase risk while driving
- Identifying the legal framework and the rules of courtesy that make safe, cooperative and responsible driving possible
- Deciding to drive or not to drive
- Driving responsibly

# Activity: Consequences for the Driver and for Others

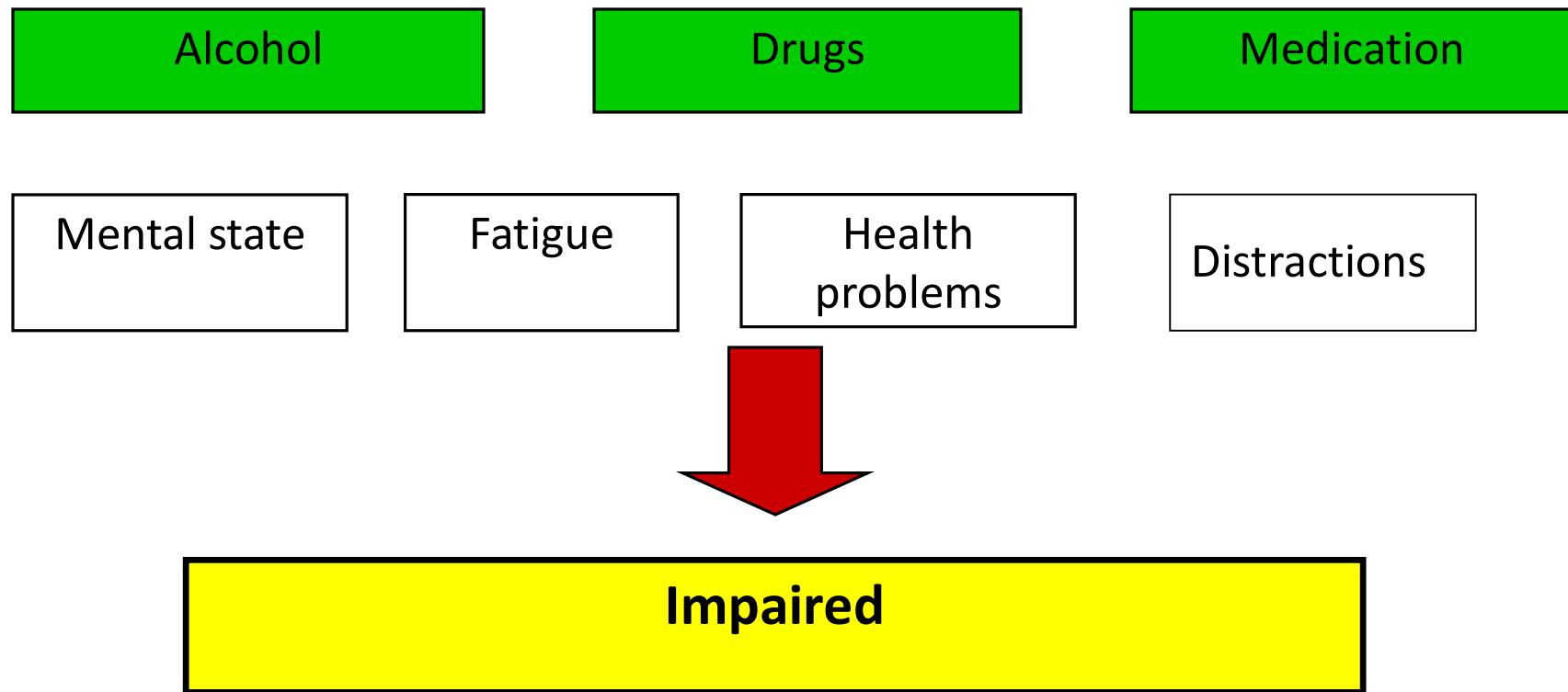
## Instructions (in teams)

- Appoint a spokesperson to report back to all participants.
- On the basis of your current knowledge, make a detailed list of the consequences that driving while impaired by alcohol or drugs could have on you and others.

# To Avoid the Consequences, Adopt Responsible Strategies!

- *If you drink or take drugs, don't drive.*
  - Stay put, sleep at a friend's place, etc.
  - Take a taxi, use a drive-home service.
  - Get a ride with a driver who has not been drinking (designated driver).
  - Use public transit.
- *If you have to drive, don't drink or take drugs.*
  - Plan your trips ahead of time (your judgment becomes clouded once you start drinking or taking drugs, and you no longer make responsible decisions).
- *If you take medication:*
  - Follow the recommendations of the physician or pharmacist.
  - Read the packaging for information on the product's compatibility with driving.

# Driving = A Complex Task

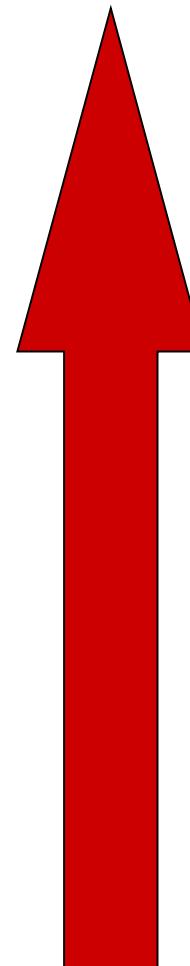


# Impaired? Don't Drive!

*All of the factors below accentuate the effects of alcohol and drugs!*



- **Mental state:** Stress, emotions (aggressiveness, broken heart, worries, etc.)
- **Fatigue:** Busy schedule (school, work, leisure activities, outings, driving lessons, etc.), drowsiness at the wheel
- **State of health:** Vision problems, medication, etc.



Risk of a collision

# What Happens to Alcohol in the Body

## Absorption of alcohol

- Alcohol is primarily absorbed by the intestine.
- Alcohol absorption is determined by:
  - the amount you drink
  - how fast you drink
  - whether you've eaten
  - certain biological particularities
  - psychological state: stress, fatigue, etc.



# What Happens to Alcohol in the Body

## Alcohol distribution

- Alcohol is distributed throughout the body's tissues.
- Once it reaches the brain, it acts on the central nervous system (where decisions are made and coordination is controlled).
- Alcohol distribution is determined in particular by:
  - the concentration of alcohol in the blood
  - body weight and body fat percentage



# What Happens to Alcohol in the Body

## Elimination of alcohol

- The liver alone eliminates more than 90% of alcohol in the body; the kidneys, lungs and sweat do the rest.
- Alcohol is eliminated by the body much more slowly than it is absorbed:  
 $\pm 15 \text{ mg of alcohol/hr} = 1 \text{ beer, 1 glass of wine or 1 glass of spirits}$



*Only time can reduce the amount of alcohol in the blood!*

# Effects of Alcohol on Driving

0.02%

*Faculties affected from the very first drink*

Typical Effects	Effects on Driving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some loss of judgment</li><li>• Relaxation</li><li>• Feeling slightly warmer</li><li>• Altered mood</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decline in visual functions (notably the ability to rapidly track a moving target)</li><li>• Decline in the ability to perform two tasks at the same time (divided attention)</li></ul>

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

# Effects of Alcohol on Driving

0.05%

*Driving ability may be affected before the legal limit is reached.*

Typical Effects	Effects on Driving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Impaired judgment</li><li>• Lowered alertness</li><li>• Release of inhibitions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduced coordination</li><li>• Reduced ability to track moving objects</li><li>• Difficulty steering</li><li>• Reduced ability to react to emergency situations</li></ul>

Source: NHTSA

# Effects of Alcohol on Driving

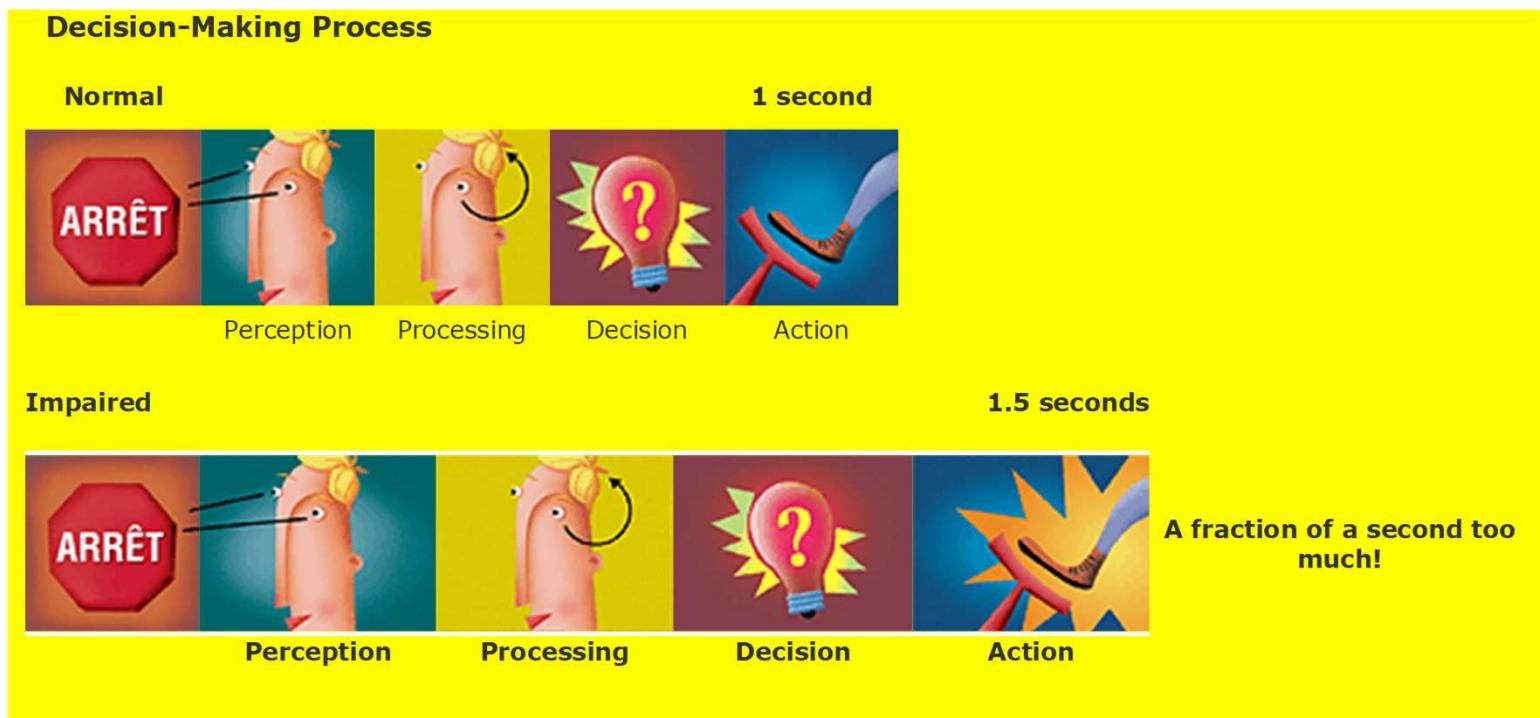
0.08%

Typical Effects	Effects on Driving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower muscle coordination (balance, speech, vision, reaction time and hearing)</li><li>• Judgment, self-control, reasoning and memory are impaired</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Concentration difficulties</li><li>• Short-term memory loss</li><li>• Speed control problems</li><li>• Reduced information processing capacity (e.g. noticing signs and signals, visual scanning)</li><li>• Impaired perception</li></ul>

Source: NHTSA

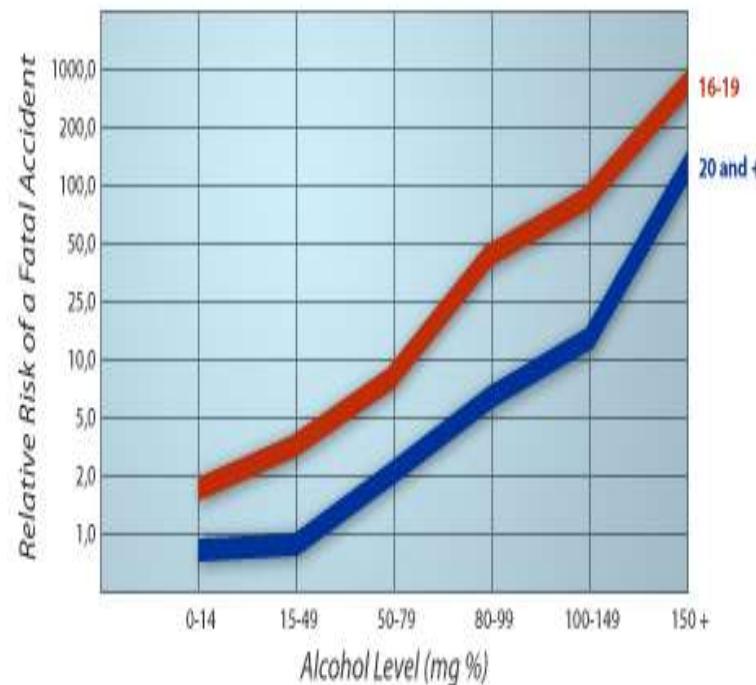
# Reaction Time

- Alcohol increases reaction time by half a second—time enough to cause a collision.



# Alcohol and the Risk of a Fatal Accident

Relative Risk of Having a Fatal Accident According to Alcohol Level and Age of Drivers



MAYHEW et al., Youth, alcohol and relative risk of crash involvement, Traffic Injury Research Foundation of Canada, 1986.

- The risk of an accident increases as the blood alcohol concentration rises.
- The risk of an accident is even higher with young drivers:
  - x 2 for concentrations between 0.05 and 0.08
  - x 5 for concentrations between 0.08 and 0.10

Source: Mayhew et al., "Youth, Alcohol and Relative Risk of Crash Involvement", TIRF, 1986

# Drinking and Driving: One of the Leading Causes of Death and Injury on the Road

Every year alcohol-related accidents cause on average:

- 110 fatalities
- 260 cases of severe injury
- 1,800 cases of mild injury

# Effects of Drugs on Driving

- **Drugs** affect the driver's faculties
  - Reflexes, concentration, vision, reaction time, coordination, etc.
  - Despite what some might believe, there are no drugs that improve driving ability.
  - The effects of drugs vary greatly depending on:
    - the type of drug taken
    - the individual who took the drug
    - the context in which the drug was taken

# Cannabis

- Cannabis is by far the most commonly used drug in Québec and the rest of Canada.
- Effects on the brain: decreased alertness and concentration, slower reflexes, poor coordination, longer reaction times, and impaired judgment.
- Effects on driving: failure to notice road signs and exits, difficulty staying in the centre of the lane, difficulty keeping a constant speed.
- Cannabis + alcohol = a very dangerous combination! The effects of cannabis and alcohol compound each other.

*Cannabis is not an alternative to drinking for designated drivers.*

# Effects of Medication on Driving

- Certain **medications** affect a driver's faculties.
  - Prescribed by a physician or sold over the counter
  - Some medications for allergies, colds, nausea, pain, coughs etc. may reduce your intellectual and physical faculties.
    - Attention, vision, behaviour and balance problems, drowsiness, etc.
  - Consult a physician or pharmacist and read the information on the product to find out about the effects on driving.

# Two Laws Apply Against Drinking, Drugs and Driving:

*Criminal Code*

*Highway Safety Code*

## ***Criminal Code***

- Prohibits driving with a blood alcohol concentration above 80 mg/100 ml of blood (0.08)
- Prohibits driving when one's ability to operate a vehicle is impaired by alcohol or drugs
- Prohibits having the care or control of a vehicle in situations 1 and 2
- Stipulates that refusing to obey a peace officer's orders (e.g. to provide a breath sample) constitutes an offence

## ***Criminal Code***

- Prohibits driving with drugs in the bloodstream. For example, a driver could face criminal charges if the level of cannabis (THC) is above the following:
  - 2 nanograms of THC per millilitre of blood
  - 5 nanograms of THC per millilitre of blood
  - 2.5 nanograms of THC per millilitre of blood, combined with a blood alcohol concentration equal to or above 50 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood
- For other types of drugs, any detectable amount is enough to be charged.

# Driving with a Blood Alcohol Concentration > 0.08

- You're over the legal limit!
  - If a police officer pulls you over and suspects that you've been drinking, the officer may ask you to take a breath test with an approved screening device (ASD).
  - Depending on the ASD results, you may be taken to the police station for a breath test, which will be analyzed with an approved instrument. The results will be admissible as evidence.

You could be charged with driving with a blood alcohol concentration above 80 mg/100 ml of blood (0.08).

# Alcohol- or Drug-Impaired Driving

- You're not over the legal limit
  - But your blood alcohol concentration is 0.04 or you have taken medication, and when a police officer pulls you over, you have trouble talking, showing him your driver's licence, walking properly, and so forth.

You could be charged with impaired driving even if you're below 0.08

- All it takes is for a police officer to see that your driving ability is impaired.
- Under the *Criminal Code*, the police officer is authorized to ask you to undergo a physical coordination test in order to determine whether you have taken drugs.

# Care or Control of a Vehicle

- You're not driving
  - But you're in the driver's seat or the police officer sees that you intend to drive.

You could be charged with having the care or control of a vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08 or while impaired.

- You'll have the burden of proving to the judge that you did not want to drive or could not drive.

# Refusing to Obey an Order

- You refuse to obey a peace officer's order
  - If you don't have a reasonable excuse and you refuse to take a breath test or undergo a physical coordination test, etc.

You could be charged with refusing to obey an order.

- Refusing to obey an order results in the stiffest penalties and measures provided for under the *Highway Safety Code* (the equivalent of a repeat offence or a blood alcohol concentration of 0.16).

# Consequences of Drinking, Drugs and Driving

# Applicable Penalties and Measures

## Under the *Criminal Code*

### After conviction

- Fine of \$1,000, in addition to other costs
- Driving prohibition for at least one year
- Criminal record
- Prison (in the event of a repeat offence, injury or death)

## Under the *Highway Safety Code*

### Immediately

- 90-day driver's licence suspension
- Vehicle seized and impounded for 30 days (if blood alcohol concentration is above 0.16 or for any repeat offence)

### After conviction

- Driver's licence revocation (1, 3 or 5 years, depending on the situation)
- Assessment of behaviour relative to alcohol and drugs
- Alcofrein session (depending on the situation)
- Mandatory alcohol ignition interlock device (depending on the situation)

# Zero-Alcohol Rule

During the learning period (learner's licence and probationary licence), drivers are subject to the **zero-alcohol** rule, which means they cannot drive if there is the slightest trace of alcohol in their body.

- **Penalties** for non-compliance with the zero-alcohol rule:
  - Fine of \$300 to \$600, in addition to other costs
  - 90-day licence suspension
  - 4 demerit points (resulting in an additional 3-month licence revocation)
- These provisions do not preclude criminal charges for impaired driving, if the blood alcohol concentration is over 0.08.

# Other Legal Provisions

- Drinking alcohol inside a vehicle is prohibited.
  - No exceptions (e.g. in a limousine or motor coach)
  - Fine for the driver: \$300 to \$600, in addition to other costs
  - Fine for the passenger: \$200 to \$300, in addition to other costs
- Penalties for driving without a valid licence (if suspended or revoked for impaired driving).
  - Fine of \$1,500 to \$3,000, in addition to other costs
  - Vehicle seized and impounded for 30 days
  - Licence plate recognition system (cameras installed on police cars for automatic detection of invalid licence plates or licences)

# Financial Consequences

**An impaired driving conviction is costly.**

- 1st offence: A minimum of \$1,750
- 2nd or subsequent offence: in the event of a repeat offence, costs are even greater (between \$4,500 and \$6,000)
- Then there are:
  - Legal fees
  - A substantial increase in insurance premiums
  - Fees for the translation of the judgment for trips to the United States (because of the criminal record)

# Social Consequences

**An impaired driving conviction affects a person's family and work.**

- The loss of a driver's licence makes it difficult to:
  - get around for work, go out to visit friends and meet family and social obligations.
- A criminal record makes it difficult to:
  - be hired (certain jobs require a clean slate)
  - purchase insurance (insurers may refuse to sell you insurance or charge higher premiums)
  - make trips outside Canada (may be a reason for another country to deny entry)

# Physical and Psychological Consequences

**A conviction for impaired driving resulting in death or injury to another person has a lifelong impact.**

- Physical
  - Trauma that is often severe for the driver and others involved in the accident
  - After-effects that make it difficult to resume one's normal activities
- Psychological
  - Post-traumatic stress
  - Loss of self-esteem, remorse when someone else is injured or killed, etc.