



# Impaired Driving: Talk With Your Kids

Impaired driving remains an issue that affects Americans every day. On average, three in five people will be involved in a crash due to impaired driving in their lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Impaired driving can have serious consequences, including injury and death. In 2016, 10,497 people died in crashes caused by alcohol-impaired driving, accounting for 28 percent of all traffic-related deaths in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, drugs other than alcohol are involved in about 16 percent of motor vehicle crashes.<sup>3</sup>

Impaired driving is entirely preventable. Know the facts, and talk with your kids about the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs:

- About one in four teen car crashes involves an underage drinking driver.<sup>4</sup>
- Every day about 800 people are injured in a drunk-driving crash.<sup>5</sup>
- Every day in America, another 29 people die as a result of drunk-driving crashes. That's one person every 50 minutes.<sup>6</sup>

- Marijuana use is increasing, and 13 percent of weekend nighttime drivers have marijuana in their system.<sup>7</sup>
- Marijuana users were about 25 percent more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers with no evidence of marijuana use.<sup>2</sup>



## Keeping Your Kids Safe

The most effective way to stop impaired driving is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Use the following tips when talking with your kids about drunk and drug-impaired driving.

**Don't Wait for the "Right" Time**—It's always a good time to talk to your kids about the dangers of impaired driving. Here are some common situations you can take advantage of to discuss drunk and drug-impaired driving:

- When your child asks to borrow the car;
- When you're at the dinner table together;
- When your child asks if he or she can ride with a friend to school/a concert/a party;
- When you're running weekend errands;
- When you're at the grocery store; and
- When you and your child are in the car together.

**Reinforce Expectations**—Make sure your children know what you expect from them when it comes to impaired driving. Let them know it's never okay to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle while under the influence, and that getting in a car with someone who has been drinking or using drugs is also dangerous.

**Help Them Build an Exit Plan**—Some kids may not know what to do if a friend or family member who is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs offers them a ride. Explain to your child that it's okay to say no, and help them think through an exit strategy. For example, you can suggest:

- Calling a rideshare service or taxi;
- Calling a relative or friend for a ride home;
- Staying the night at their current location; and
- Convincing the person under the influence not to drive. Mention that drunk and drug-impaired driving is illegal and unsafe and suggest they find another way home.

**Show Them You Care**—Kids are more likely to listen when they know you're on

their side. Make sure they know that you're talking to them about impaired driving because you care about their safety, not because you assume they would ever drive drunk or drug-impaired driving.

## Additional Resources

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Talk. They Hear You."<sup>®</sup> Campaign aims to equip parents and caregivers with the knowledge and resources they need to talk with their children under the age of 21 about alcohol and other drugs. Visit [www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov](http://www.underagedrinking.samhsa.gov) for additional resources to help you get the conversation started.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2017, October). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2016 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 450). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>2</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2017, October). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2016 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 450). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>3</sup> Compton, R. P. & Berning, A. (2015, February). Drug and alcohol crash risk. (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 812 117). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>4</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2015, October). Young drivers: 2013 data. (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 200). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>5</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "Traffic Safety Facts 2015: Alcohol-Impaired Driving." Washington DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 2016. <http://www.nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812231.pdf>
- <sup>6</sup> National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2017, October). Alcohol-impaired driving: 2016 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 812 450). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>7</sup> Berning, A., Compton, R., & Wochinger, K. (2015). Results of the 2013–2014 national roadside survey of alcohol and drug use by drivers. (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 812 118). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- <sup>8</sup> Lacey, J. H., Kelley-Baker, T., Berning, A., Romano, E., Ramirez, A., Yao, J., ... & Compton, R. (2016, December). Drug and alcohol crash risk: A case-control study (Report No. DOT HS 812 355). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.