

Alcohol and drugs



Alcohol and drug related crashes account for around 40% of road fatalities annually.

The effects of alcohol and other drugs are wide ranging. Alcohol slows your reflexes, reduces coordination and increases risk taking behaviour making a crash more likely. Cannabis, cocaine and similar drugs affect your driving skills and concentration. Combining alcohol with other drugs can increase the impairing effects, even if taken in small quantities.

Know the rules

- ▶ In NSW full licence holders and supervising drivers must have a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) below 0.05.
- ▶ Drivers of public vehicles such as buses and taxis, drivers of large vehicles greater than 13.9 tonnes and drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods must have a BAC below 0.02.
- ▶ Learner and Provisional (P1 and P2) licence holders **must have a zero BAC**.
- ▶ It is illegal to drive with the presence of ecstasy, cannabis, cocaine or methamphetamine in your oral fluid, blood or urine.
- ▶ It is illegal to drive under the influence of illegal or prescription drugs.

Don't take the risk

- ▶ The NSW Government takes a zero tolerance approach to drink and drug driving, to stop drivers putting themselves and others at risk by getting behind the wheel after drinking alcohol and using drugs.
- ▶ Police can conduct random breath testing (RBT) for alcohol or mobile drug testing (MDT) for illegal drugs anywhere, anytime.
- ▶ Drink and drug driving are serious offences. Penalties can include immediate suspension or loss of licence, fines, prison terms, and you may also be ordered to install an alcohol interlock. It is also an offence if you refuse to take a breath or drug test.

The facts — Alcohol

- ▶ Each year in NSW around 60 people die and 317 are seriously injured in crashes involving an illegal alcohol level.
- ▶ Any alcohol in your system can impair driving and increases crash risk. Alcohol slows your brain so that you can't respond to situations, make decisions or react quickly. It reduces your ability to judge how fast you are moving or your distance from other cars, people or objects.
- ▶ Deaths from alcohol related crashes on NSW roads have been greatly reduced since the introduction of RBT in 1982.

The facts – Drugs

- ▶ Around 24 per cent of NSW road fatalities each year, equating to around 79 lives lost involve a driver with the presence of illegal drugs in their system.
- ▶ MDT **detects the presence of four common illegal drugs:** ecstasy, cannabis, cocaine and methamphetamine (including speed and ice).
- ▶ Illegal drugs can be detected in your saliva by an MDT for a significant time after drug use, even if you feel you are OK to drive. The detection period varies depending on the type of drug, amount taken, frequency of drug use, and other factors that vary between individuals.
- ▶ Many prescription and non-prescription medicines affect your ability to drive or ride safely. Negative effects include drowsiness, blurred vision, poor concentration, slower reaction times and aggressive behaviour.

What's your Plan B?

If you're affected by alcohol or other drugs after a night out, trying to drive or ride home will put you and other road users in danger. Alcohol and other drugs (illegal, prescription and over-the-counter) can make a crash more likely.

Around one third of all fatal drink driving crashes occur between 9pm and 3am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. In this 18-hour peak social period, your chances of being in a fatal alcohol-related crash are much higher than at any other time during the week.

For your own safety and the well-being of others, have a Plan B to get home. If you are planning a big night out, plan ahead:

- ▶ Leave the car at home
- ▶ Use public transport
- ▶ Take a taxi or rideshare
- ▶ Get a lift with someone who has not been drinking or using drugs
- ▶ Stay at a friend's house
- ▶ Tell a friend or let someone know if you've been drinking or have taken drugs and don't feel well enough to drive
- ▶ Walk home, but take extra care as you will be a more vulnerable pedestrian

How can I stay safe?

- ▶ Don't drink any alcohol if you plan to drive and always have a Plan B to get home safely. Trying to drive or ride home will put you and other road users in danger.
- ▶ The safest bet is not to drive at all if you may have illegal drugs in your system or are under the influence of any substance, legal or illegal.
- ▶ If you're affected by alcohol or other drugs after a night out remember that you may still be over your legal alcohol limit for much of the next day.
- ▶ Don't risk trying to calculate your BAC. Alcohol affects different people in different ways. Your BAC is difficult to guess and will likely be inaccurate anyway.
- ▶ There are no quick fixes. Black coffee, showers, water or food do not speed up the rate at which your body gets rid of the alcohol from your system.
- ▶ Check if any medications you are taking could affect your driving.

More information

Visit the Transport for NSW road safety website (roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/stayingsafe/alcoholdrugs) for information on alcohol and drugs, how RBT and MDTs work, and to learn about other important road safety topics.

If you need help with alcohol or other drugs, call the Alcohol and Drug Information Service on (02) 9361 8000 or the 24-hour support line on 1800 422 599.

If you're driving for work, visit the Towards Zero website (towardszero.nsw.gov.au/workplace) to complete the Road safety: Everybody's business eLearning course to learn about road safety risk and how you can stay safe on NSW roads.



Scan the QR code
for more information
on road safety

