

NARRATOR

It's no secret that when we drink, we sometimes do dumb stuff.

That's because drinking can give us false confidence to engage in dangerous behaviour but affects our ability to do the most basic human tasks. It can seem harmless — even amusing — until it's happening behind the wheel of a car.

Drinking alcohol or taking drugs affects our judgement so we're more likely to make poor decisions. This is made worse by your impaired vision and poor reaction time.

This combination of overconfidence and the dulling of our senses is why drink driving is a major contributor to fatal crashes in Australia each year. It's a very serious 'Fatal 5' behaviour.

We have alcohol limits in place to make sure we're not driving dangerously impaired because of our Blood Alcohol Concentration.

These limits refer to the concentration of alcohol in our bloodstream.

For younger drivers with Learner or Provisional licenses, the limit is zero. A lot of people assume that if they're driving below the legal Blood Alcohol Concentration, they aren't impaired. This isn't true.

In fact, if your Blood Alcohol Concentration is between 0.02 and 0.05, you're twice as likely to have a crash. Your ability to judge distance, locate moving lights, and respond to hazards are all impacted as soon as alcohol enters your system.

Driving under the influence of certain drugs is just as risky as having a Blood Alcohol Concentration of 0.1 to 0.15%. That means at best, you're 10 times more likely to crash.

These substances have devastating effects on your driving ability. Some can make you drowsy and impact your concentration, while others can increase risk-taking behaviour and cause aggression. They can also affect your reflexes, alertness, and muscle control.

Most of us forget that many common, over the counter and prescription medications can have the same effect. Always seek advice from your doctor and read the label to learn about how your medication might affect your driving.

Drugs and alcohol make us terrible drivers. So why do people still get behind the wheel and play Russian roulette with their own and other people's lives?

It turns out that after taking drugs or alcohol, many of us don't know when we've sobered up. We may think we're no longer impaired but the drugs or alcohol are still in our systems.

Once alcohol is in your system, your body has to process it — and it's very slow. Many people think eating fatty foods like chips, pizza, or burgers sober them up faster when really, they just slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream.

Take a greasy kebab for example. When you combine one of these fat-filled wonders with a drink, your body will absorb alcohol slower — but there's a big difference between slowing alcohol absorption and being sober.

Once alcohol is in your system, it's in. The only way for its effects to wear off is for your body to process it. So there's really no magic cure when it comes to sobering up.

The same goes for sleep — it may ease the physical effects of alcohol and make you feel a little better, however, your body needs time to break down the alcohol — and sleep doesn't make this happen any faster. But there are steps you can take so you don't put yourself and other drivers in danger.

DR. BRIDIE

So if you're going to have any alcohol or you're going to use any drugs, the best way to stay safe on the road is to separate the risks. If you're going to have a drink, plan not to drive a vehicle. There are other options.

If you're going to go to a party, plan to sleep over, get a taxi, or have a designated driver (that doesn't touch drugs or alcohol at all) that does all the driving.

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If you're drinking, don't drive — it's really that simple. Find ANY other way that doesn't involve an impaired driver getting behind the wheel. Smart planning and being there for your friends will save you from dangerous situations on the road — and potentially from much worse.