

Think Before Taking the Passenger Seat

Before you get in the passenger's seat when a friend is driving, do you think about your friend's brain? You should! Alcohol, prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, illegal drugs, and fatigue can interfere with or impair the brain's ability to function properly. More than 10,000 people were killed by impaired drivers in 2011, and thousands of others were injured. Passengers need to recognize the signs and speak up to prevent, avoid, or get out of dangerous impaired-driving situations and stay safe.

It's not always easy to speak up to your friends, but practicing how to handle a situation before it happens can help prepare you if it does.

Read each scenario below about impaired driving. Decide what you would say and how you would react.

- 1 Your friend is giving you a ride home from the Friday night football game. You wait for her at the car. As she walks toward the car, you notice that she trips a few times. You ask her if she's okay. She tells you she had a beer with some friends. She says she's fine. What do you say and do?**
- 2 Your friend calls at 6:45 a.m. to say he's running late to pick you up for school. He keeps yawning as he tells you that he's been up all night studying and will be leaving his house in 10 minutes. You know he has been up late all week. What do you say and do?**
- 3 You meet your friend after soccer practice. She skipped practice because she has a really bad cold, for which she's been taking over-the-counter medicine. She waited to give you a ride home so you could work on your science project together. You notice that she seems groggy and a little out of it. What do you say and do?**
- 4 Your friend's older brother is going to drop off the two of you at the mall and then pick you up later. When they arrive at your house her brother is driving and his friend is in the front passenger seat. As you get into the backseat of the car with your friend, you notice that there are beer cans in the front seat. What do you say and do?**

Speak Up for Passenger Safety

- If your friend is impaired, don't get in the car. Speak up! Tell him or her not to drive.
- Tell your friend you don't feel comfortable.
- Tell your friend it's too risky.
- Remind your friend of the facts.
- If your friend is already driving, ask him to pull over.
- Offer an alternative.
- Offer to drive if you have a license and you're not impaired.
- Call your parents for a ride—they would rather see you safe.
- Call a taxi or ask another friend for a ride.
- If your friend gets mad, he or she will get over it. If he or she doesn't, ask yourself if you want friends who could hurt you.