



Parenting for Prevention: *Marijuana*

About Marijuana

- Marijuana is **the most common illicit drug** used in the United States.
- Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds from the hemp plant *Cannabis sativa*. It contains the psychoactive (mind-altering) chemical **delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)**.
- It is known by many **different names**: pot, herb, weed, grass, 420, boom, ganja, reefer, Mary Jane, bud, Sour D, hooch, chronic, to name a few.
- Marijuana is **usually** smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes (joints) or in pipes or water pipes (bongs). It can also be smoked in blunts (cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with a mixture of marijuana and tobacco) or be mixed in food or brewed as a tea.
- Marijuana smoke has a **pungent and distinctive**, usually sweet-and-sour, odor.
- When marijuana is smoked, **the effects are felt almost immediately**. This is because THC quickly reaches every organ in the body, including the brain. The effects of smoked marijuana can last from 1 to 3 hours.
- Today's marijuana is **more potent** than it was decades ago. In 1970, the THC potency was 1%; today it is on average 13%.

Fast Facts

If use rates stay as they are today, by the time they graduate high school, about **46%** of U.S. teens will have tried marijuana at least once in their lifetime.

Marijuana can be an addictive drug. About **1 in 6** people who start using as a teen, and **25-50%** of those who use it every day, become addicted to marijuana.

Marijuana accounts for the largest percentage of admissions (**63%**) for youth 12-14 receiving substance abuse treatment and **69%** for youth 15-17.

What Parents Need to Know: Perception of Harm vs. Use

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), although marijuana use among teens dropped dramatically in the previous decade (to a prevalence of about 12.4% for past-month use in 2007), marijuana use among teens today is on the rise. In 2013, nearly 23% of high school seniors were current marijuana users, and 6.5% used marijuana daily.

The annual Monitoring the Future survey, which has been tracking teen attitudes and drug use since 1975, shows that ***use of marijuana over time is directly related to how safe teens perceive the drug to be; currently the number of teens who think marijuana users risk harming themselves is declining.***

Today's teens are bombarded with messaging that influences their perceptions of risk about marijuana use. ***Use your influence*** to remind your teen that marijuana use is **dangerous and can be addictive**. It can interfere with safe driving, school, friends, and personal goals. Smoking marijuana is **harmful** to the body. Smoking marijuana has **negative** short-term and long-term effects. Smoking marijuana **can change** who they want to grow up to be.

The Risks of Marijuana Use

Marijuana use can adversely affect a teen's overall health and is associated with both short-term and long-term risks. Some teens try marijuana because they are curious, want to fit in, or feel pressure from friends to try it. Others use it as a way to cope with anxiety, depression, anger or boredom. Teens who smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol are at a higher risk for use.

Short Term Risks

- problems with learning and memory
- distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch)
- poor motor coordination
- increased heart rate
- decreased motivation

Long Term Risks

- school failure
- decreased motivation
- disruption of personal relationships, daily functioning
- heart and lung vulnerabilities
- addiction
- other drug use



RESOURCES

FOR PARENTS

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-parents-need-to-know

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/marijuana.html

Addictions.com

<http://www.addictions.com/marijuana>

Office of National Drug Control Policy

www.ncjrs.gov/ondcppubs/publications/pdf/marijuana_myths_facts.pdf

FOR TEENS

National Institute on Drug Abuse – Drugs: Shatter the Myths

www.drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov/files/teenbrochure_508.pdf

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/marijuana.pdf

Above the Influence

<http://abovetheinfluence.com/drugs/marijuana/>

National Institute on Drug Abuse

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-teens/letter-to-teens>

NIDA for Teens

<http://teens.drugabuse.gov/>

Talking Tips: How to Start a Conversation

Talk with them about the real risks of marijuana use. Let them know the facts. You are still the primary influence when it comes to a teen's decision to not use alcohol or other drugs.

- Arm yourself with some basic information from this tip sheet to begin the conversation: it **is** an addictive drug, it **is not** harmless, it **is** unsafe to use if you are behind the wheel, it is associated with school failure, and it **can** cause psychosis or a panic attack, especially if used with alcohol.
- Be clear about your values, expectations, and no-use rules about marijuana and alcohol use.
- Ask your teen to talk about their perception of risk with using marijuana. Is it different than their perception of risk with using alcohol? Why or why not?
- Identify opportunities in movies or on TV to talk about how marijuana use is portrayed. How do they feel about that portrayal?
- Ask them to name things that are important to them – drama, music, sports, college? Encourage them to talk about how marijuana would interfere with those goals.
- Divulging personal use is an individual decision. What matters most to you today is protecting your child from the dangers of drug use and to make conversations about making good decisions a regular habit.
- If you suspect your teen is using, consult the resource list and/ or talk with his or her physician about your concerns.

Parenting for Prevention is a Decisions at Every Turn Coalition educational series for parents and other caring adults to increase awareness and knowledge about important youth issues and to encourage dialogue about making healthy choices.

Please visit <http://www.AshlandDecisions.org/parent-tip-sheets.html> for our complete library of tip sheets.

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