Marijuana Risks Fast Facts Sheet

Health and Addiction

- THC over-activates certain brain cell receptors, resulting in effects such as altered senses; impaired memory and ability to learn; increased difficulty thinking and problem-solving; mood disorders and impaired body movement.[i]
- Marijuana use affects the brain, specifically the parts responsible for memory, learning, attention and reaction time. These effects can last up to 28 days after abstinence from the drug.[ii]
- People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are four to seven times more likely than adults to develop an addiction to marijuana.[iii]
- In the offspring of marijuana users, there is an association between prenatal marijuana use and altered frontal lobe functioning.[iv] Daily marijuana users are more likely to have children with smaller head circumferences.[v]
- THC transferred through a mother's milk potentially causes a decrease in infant motor development evident at age one.[vi]
- Pregnant women who are marijuana users experience an increased risk of a stillborn.[vii]
- Marijuana smokers have a variety of respiratory problems such as daily cough, more frequent acute chest illness, and a heightened risk of lung infection.[viii] When equal amounts of marijuana and tobacco are smoked, marijuana deposits four times as much tar into the lungs.[ix]
- People who abuse or are dependent on marijuana are 3 times more likely to become dependent on heroin.[x]
- Marijuana use can exacerbate schizophrenic symptoms[xi] and hasten the onset of psychosis by more than 2 ½ years.[xii]
- Marijuana users who start in adulthood have a 1 in 10 chance of becoming dependent on marijuana. However, if you start smoking in adolescence your chances increase to 1 in 6.[xiii]
- There is no clinical, controlled research to support the adoption of new CBD legislation for epilepsy, therefore the American Epilepsy Society does not support current CBD legislation.[xiv]

Adolescence and Youth

- Adolescent regular users before the age of 18 lose an average of 8 IQ points by age 38.[xv]
- The perceived risk of marijuana use continues to decrease among adolescents.[xvi] High level of marijuana use in adolescents is related to poorer educational outcomes, lower income, greater welfare dependence and unemployment, and lower relationship and life satisfaction.[xvii]
- Juvenile use of marijuana is higher in states with medical marijuana use. This disproves the theory that adolescent usage will not increase with legal forms of cannabis.[xviii]
- There is an increased risk of illicit drug use and suicide attempts for those who use marijuana daily before age 17.[xix]

Education

- Students in high school who initiated marijuana use are over 2 times more likely to drop out of school than an individual who has not initiated marijuana use.[xx]
- In Washington State (2013-2014), 48% of expulsions and 42% of suspensions related to drug abuse are directly involved with marijuana.[xxi]
- In the Seattle Public School System, 98% of the student drug violations involved marijuana (September 2013-May 2014).[xxii]
- Adolescent marijuana users show working memory, attention, and learning abnormalities that persist at least 6 weeks following cessation of use.[xxiii]
- Students that do not have access to legal marijuana have a higher performance rate in school, especially in relation to numerical skills.[xxiv]
- Educational attainment is greatly diminished due to early marijuana use. The effect is compounded with chronic use.[xxv]

Employment

- The residual effects of cannabis can persist for up to 24 hours, which can have a negative impact on employees' abilities to complete their work at a high functioning level.[xxvi]
- Fifteen percent of past-month marijuana users admit in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health that at some point within the last 30 days, they didn't show up for work because they "just didn't want to be there." That is far more than for the population overall (7.4 percent) or for alcohol users (7.9 percent).[xxvii]
- According to a report by SAMHSA, employees using marijuana cause 55% more accidents than those who do not. Positive drug tests showing THC in the employee's system verified 85% more on-the-job injuries by marijuana users.[xxviii]
- The use of cannabis is associated with a reduction in work commitment among adults.[xxix]

Society

- Frequent marijuana use predicts a lower likelihood of students attaining a college degree.[xxx]
- Chronic cannabis users will likely end up in a lower socioeconomic class than their parents. This entails lower-paying, less skilled, and less prestigious jobs. Furthermore, they experience more financial, work-related and relationship difficulties.[xxxi]
- People who use marijuana heavily and over an extended period of time are more likely to experience troubled employment. In addition, they are likely to demonstrate unhealthy social behavior and have difficulty maintaining healthy relationships.[xxxii]
- Vehicle crashes resulting in serious injury or death are over 1.5 times more likely after cannabis use.[xxxiii]
- Poison center call rates in decriminalized marijuana states increased over 30% between 2005-2011, while the rate remain unchanged in non-legal states.[xxxiv]

Colorado

- Colorado marijuana-related traffic deaths increased 92% from 2010 – 2014. During the same time period all traffic deaths only increased 8%.[xxxv]
- In 2013, 11.16% of youth, ages 12 to 17, were considered current marijuana users compared to 7.15% nationally. Colorado ranked 3rd in the nation for youth marijuana use, which was 56% higher than the national average.[xxxvi]
- From 2008-2014 drug related suspensions and expulsions increased by 40%, mainly due to marijuana related offenses.[xxxvii]
- In 2014, when retail marijuana businesses began operating, there was a 38% increase in the amount of marijuana-related hospitalizations.[xxxviii]
- Due to an increased production of hash oil, which is highly flammable, there has been an increased number of house fires and explosions.[xxxix]
- States cannot ultimately regulate who ends up using marijuana due to the inability to track the product after it leaves the store. A 2014 Colorado study estimated that 40 percent of the marijuana consumed by adult Coloradans came from outside the regulated structure.[xl]
- Denver police records reveal that legalization has not eradicated the illegal marijuana black market. In 2014 alone police have seized 7,863 more pounds than in 2011.[xli]

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