

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, , Sour D, hooch, chronic, skunk, dabs, wax, shatter, honey oil, to name a few.
- Marijuana has traditionally been smoked in hand-rolled cigarettes (joints), in pipes, or in water pipes (bongs). **In recent years, use of high THC (up to 95% THC) concentrates** has become increasingly popular. These concentrates can be discretely vaped in many standard vape devices with no detectable odor.
- Marijuana smoke has a **pungent and distinctive**, usually sweet-and-sour, odor; high THC marijuana flower (skunk) is named for its "skunk" smell.
- When marijuana is smoked/vaped, **the effects are felt almost immediately**. This is because THC quickly reaches every organ in the body, including the brain. The effects of inhaled marijuana can last from 1 to 3 hours.
- **Edibles** refer to food or drink that contain marijuana. Because THC is absorbed more slowly when ingested, this can lead to the consumption of very high doses, resulting in negative effects like anxiety, paranoia and, psychosis symptoms (i.e. delusions, hallucinations, talking incoherently, and agitation)
- Today's marijuana is **more potent** than it was decades ago. In 1970, the THC potency was 1%; today it is on average 13%.
- **Daily, average potency** marijuana users are 3x more likely to be diagnosed with **first episode psychosis** than non-users. With **daily use of high potency** marijuana, the likelihood increases to 5x.

Fast Facts

Nationwide, marijuana use among adolescents **edged upward** in 2017, the first significant increase in seven years. Specifically, in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades the respective increases were 0.8% (to 10.1%), 1.6% (to 25.5%) and 1.5% (to 37.1%).

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.

As with other vaping measures, **marijuana vaping** increased significantly from when it was first measured in 2017 to 2018.

DrugAbuse.gov/MTF

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

An adolescent's perception of the risks associated with substance use is an important determinant of whether he or she engages in substance use. The percentages of adolescents reporting substance use in the past month are generally lower among those who perceived great risk from using substances than among those who did not perceive great risk.

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. Teens who smoke cigarettes, vape, or drink alcohol are at a higher risk for use.

- problems with thinking, learning, and memory
- distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch)
- poor motor coordination and balance
- decreased motivation
- mood changes

Long Term Risks

- school failure
- decreased motivation
- disruption of personal relationships, daily functioning
- heart, lung and respiratory vulnerabilities
- other drug use and/or addiction
- potential mental health problems, including depression, suicidal thoughts, paranoia, hallucinations (seeing things that aren't there), and delusions (believing something that is not true)



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
<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana>
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
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
<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/marijuana>

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.