



The Truth About Marijuana

Slang—Weed, Pot, Grass, Reefer, Ganja, Mary Jane, Blunt, Joint, Roach, Nail

Get the Facts...

Marijuana affects your brain. THC (the active ingredient in marijuana) affects the nerve cells in the part of the brain where memories are formed.

Marijuana affects your self-control. Marijuana can seriously affect your sense of time and your coordination, impacting things like driving. In 2005, nearly 242,200 people were admitted to emergency rooms suffering from marijuana-related problems.¹

Marijuana affects your lungs. Marijuana smoke deposits four times more tar in the lungs² and contains 50 percent to 70 percent more cancer-causing substances than tobacco smoke does.³

Marijuana affects other aspects of your health. Marijuana can limit your body's ability to fight off infection. Heavy marijuana use also has been linked with depression, anxiety, and personality disturbances.⁴

Marijuana is not always what it seems. Marijuana can be laced with substances such as PCP, formaldehyde, or codeine cough syrup without your knowledge. "Blunts"—hollowed-out cigars filled with marijuana—sometimes have crack cocaine added.

Marijuana can be addictive. Not everyone who uses marijuana becomes addicted, but some users do develop signs of dependence. In 2006, nearly 290,000 people entered drug treatment programs to kick their marijuana habit.⁵

Before You Risk It...

Know the law. It is illegal to buy or sell marijuana. In most States, holding even small amounts of marijuana can lead to fines or arrest.

Get the facts. Smoking marijuana can cause health

problems, such as chronic coughing, chest colds, lung infections, breathing problems, and cancer.⁶

Stay informed. It has not yet been proven that using marijuana leads to using other drugs, but most teens who try drugs start with marijuana, alcohol, or tobacco.⁷ One study found that people who had used marijuana before the age of 17 were more likely to use other drugs and develop addiction problems later on.⁸

Know the risks. Marijuana affects your coordination and reaction time, raising your risk of injury or death from car crashes and other accidents.

Keep your edge. Marijuana affects your judgment, drains your motivation, and can make you feel anxious.

Look around you. Most teens aren't smoking marijuana. According to a 2006 study, about four out of five 12- to 17-year-old youths had never even tried marijuana.⁹

Know the Signs...

How can you tell if a friend is using marijuana?

Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may be using marijuana:

- Seeming dizzy and having trouble walking
- Having red, bloodshot eyes and smelly hair and clothes
- Having a hard time remembering things that just happened
- Acting silly for no apparent reason

What can you do to help someone who is using marijuana or other drugs? Be a real friend. Encourage your friend to seek professional help. For information and referrals, call SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727).

For more information or for references to facts found in this *Tips for Teens*, go to www.samhsa.gov/SHIN.

Marijuana: What Parents Need to Know

Go to www.Colorado.gov/marijuana to find the latest information about the laws in Colorado.

- Only adults over age 21 may buy, possess, or use marijuana legally.
- It is illegal for people under age 21 to buy, possess, or use marijuana. It is illegal for adults to give marijuana to someone underage, and retail outlets can lose their license for selling marijuana to someone underage.
- Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal.
- Marijuana is still illegal under federal law. Students with a past conviction of any controlled substance, including marijuana, are **not eligible for federal financial aid for college.**

Research tells us: (please keep in mind that most studies we have now are based on THC levels of about 12 %.)

- Surveys of teens repeatedly tell us that they listen most to their PARENTS when it comes to drugs & alcohol use.
- THC levels in marijuana decades ago were about 2.3%. Today THC levels exceed 8% and often reach 35% in medical grades and up to 90% in some edibles.
- Marijuana use at an early age can lead to a greater risk of:
 - Decreased IQ by as much as 8 points
 - Poor educational outcomes
 - Mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety and schizophrenia
 - Increased absences from school
 - Increased risk of dropping out
 - 1:6 to 1:4 who use at an early age will become addicted

Go to SpeakNowColorado.org (or HableAhoraColorado.org) to learn about signs of youth substance use and tips for talking to your children about drugs and alcohol.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) recently released the "Talk. They Hear You." campaign for parents to prevent underage drinking. The tool can be used to help prevent underage marijuana use in Colorado as well since it is a substance that is legal for adults but not youth to use. <http://beta.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>

Some tips for talking to your children include:

- Start early! Start talking to your children in 4th and 5th grade before they may be tempted to try marijuana.
- Most youth are not using marijuana. Young people do not need to use it to fit in with their peers. Over 60% of high school students and 90% of middle school students in Colorado have never even tried marijuana. (Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, available at www.chd.dphe.state.co.us/topics.aspx?q=Adolescent_Health_Data)
- Be a good role model by not using marijuana or drinking excessively around your children.
- Be sure to keep all drugs and alcohol inaccessible to your children, particularly marijuana edibles that may be enticing to children but are highly concentrated and therefore more dangerous.
- Remain engaged in your children's lives and keep communication open.
- Give your children ways to say no to drugs. Talk about what they can say, and what they can do if they are offered drugs by a peer.
- Adult bodies and brains are more able to handle alcohol and marijuana use. Youth have bodies and brains that are still developing and are more severely impacted by alcohol and marijuana use.
- Explain that marijuana use is unsafe while driving and doubles the chances of being involved in an accident.
- Explain that marijuana use is associated with:
 - Poor academic performance.
 - Problems with memory and concentration
 - Increased aggression
 - Car accidents
 - Use of other drugs or alcohol
 - Risky sexual behaviors
 - The same breathing problems as come from smoking cigarettes
 - Decreased motivation or interest
 - Lower intelligence
 - Mental health problems like depression, anxiety, anger, moodiness, psychosis, panic attacks, and suicide
 - Decreased or lack of response to mental health medication
 - Increased risk of side effects from marijuana

Sources: SpeakNowColorado.org, <http://beta.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking>, <http://learnaboutmarijuana.org/parentpreventionbooklet2014.pdf>, http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/Facts_for_Families_Pages/Marijuana_and_Teens_106.aspx,