



Facts About Marijuana

Having real facts about marijuana can help you counteract the pro-marijuana information your child may be “researching”. Teens will sometimes use the internet to “prove” that marijuana is not only harmless, but helpful. While there may be medical benefits to marijuana that need further research, no one is recommending that teens use marijuana. In fact, until a person is at least 25, their brain is continuing to develop, and can be harmed by using marijuana.

Facts About Marijuana

Marijuana stimulates parts of the brain that contain the highest number of receptors. This causes the “high” that users feel. Other short-term effects include:

- Altered senses (ex: seeing brighter colors)
- Difficulty with thinking and problem-solving
- Impaired body movement
- Altered sense of time
- Changes in mood
- Impaired memory

Long-term effects of Marijuana

Marijuana also affects brain development. When marijuana users begin using as teenagers, the drug reduces the ability to think, remember, recall, and learn, by reducing the brain's

effectiveness in building new connections.

Marijuana's detrimental effect on these abilities is long-term and may be irreversible. For example, a recent study showed that people who smoked marijuana heavily in their teenage years lost an average of eight IQ points between ages 13 and 38. These abilities did not fully return in those who quit marijuana as adults. Interestingly, those participants who began smoking marijuana as adults (older than age 26) did not show significant decline in mental processes, underscoring the importance of abstinence during the adolescent period.

Rise in Marijuana's THC Levels

Based on data from DEA marijuana seizures, we know that the concentration of THC (the primary psychoactive chemical in marijuana) has increased steadily over the past 20 years. This indicates that your teenager's exposure to cannabis presents an even greater risk of harm than what was experienced by previous generations. This puts people younger than 25 years of age at particularly high risk because of continuing brain development.

The risk of increased THC is compounded by the recent rise and popularity of cannabis extracts, which also increase the chance of acute reactions, including psychosis. These extracts can be used in edibles or smoked in vapes.

New Generation, New Ways to Use

Previous generations smoked marijuana like cigarettes or sometimes baked the leaves into foods like cookies or brownies. Today's youth use in these ways, but also create extracts called wax or dabs. These have much higher concentrations of THC compared to smoking cannabis leaves.

Edibles take longer to digest and produce a more intense and longer-lasting high. Due to the delay between ingestion and feeling results, users often consume a greater quantity, which leads to increased risks. In states with legalized cannabis, users can find these products ready made, often with very high THC contents.

"Dabbing" is another (and perhaps the most) disturbing trend with cannabis use. Dabbing is the process of heating a cannabis extract against a heated surface and inhaling the smoke. Some users utilize vaporizers (vapes) for their marijuana as well. These extracts have up to 90% THC levels.

Early evidence suggests that high concentration cannabis used in "dabbing" and vaping are more likely to result in physical dependence and withdrawal symptoms.

Mental effects of marijuana

Regardless of what your kids believe, research has found that long-term use of marijuana has been repeatedly associated with increased risk for the development of severe mental illness.

Some users may experience:

- Temporary hallucinations - sensations and images that seem real though they are not
- Temporary paranoia - extreme and unreasonable distrust of others
- Emergence of psychotic symptoms - such as an increased rate and severity of Schizophrenia symptoms (i.e., hallucinations, paranoia, and disorganized thinking).

Marijuana is also linked to other common mental health problems in teens including depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and self-harm.

How Does Marijuana Affect a User's Life?

Compared to nonusers, heavy marijuana users (more than 2 times per week) are more likely to report the following (NIDA 2016):



Decreased life satisfaction



Legal Problems



Relationship distress



Dropping out of school



Poor physical health



Financial issues



Poor mental health



Job difficulties



Less career success



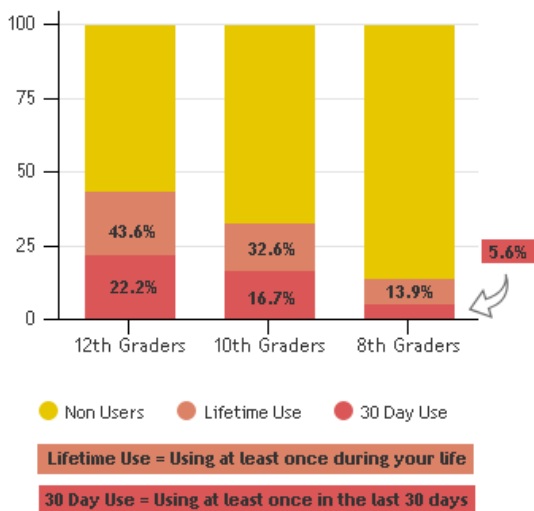
Poor academics



Unintentional bodily harm

Teens and Marijuana: What's the Truth?

How Many Teens Really Use?



Teens In Need:



10⁺% of teens are in need of treatment for substance use

90⁺% of teens who need treatment never get it.

Marijuana Causes Many Negative Effects in Teens:

Increases In:

- Risky Sexual Behavior
- Impulsivity
- Withdrawal
- Negative Affect (Mood)
- Cravings with Cues

Decreases In:

- IQ
- Executive Function
- Decision Making
- Attention
- Cognitive Processing Speed
- Verbal Memory

Because teen brains are not fully developed, there is no safe level of marijuana use for teens.

Monitoring the Future 2018, CA5A 2011



The road to recovery

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