

10 THINGS PARENTS MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT

Marijuana




NARCONON[®]
DRUG PREVENTION & REHABILITATION

DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT MARIJUANA?

- 1 Does marijuana lead to use of other drugs?
- 2 Is today's marijuana the same as twenty or thirty years ago?
- 3 Does it affect a young person's ability to learn?
- 4 Are its effects temporary or lasting?
- 5 Is it addictive?
- 6 Is it really a medicine?
- 7 Does it create any negative emotional changes?
- 8 Can it create mental or physical problems?
- 9 Are there any life-threatening risks associated with marijuana use?
- 10 How are your kids being "sold" on this drug?

PROTECTING YOUR CHILDREN

It may be confusing to you when you see or hear about so many people smoking marijuana and read news about marijuana laws being changed. And your children are being exposed to a steady stream of pro-marijuana influences in movies and on television.



What about the rest of the story?

You may be the only person to tell your children how dangerous marijuana abuse can be but just telling them not to use marijuana is not enough. You need the facts so you can tell your children the truth. This will help you keep your children safe from marijuana abuse and addiction.

Here then, are 10 vital things you
must know about marijuana.

1

MARIJUANA IS A “STARTER” DRUG



For many people, marijuana is the first drug they abuse. The United Nations has stated that cannabis use almost always precedes the use of other drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin or prescription opiates.

It is not known if marijuana creates chemical changes that make the use of other drugs more appealing or if it is just a matter that once a person gets started, it does not seem that significant to try another drug.

A recent Yale University study found that both young men and women who used marijuana were far more likely to follow this with abuse of prescription drugs – young men had a risk 250% higher.

The early use of tobacco and alcohol also tended to result in increased use of stronger drugs later in life.

You might like to know also that smoking cigarettes makes one much likelier to begin smoking marijuana.



2

MARIJUANA IS MORE POTENT THAN BEFORE

The average potency of marijuana goes up year after year. The strongest intoxicating chemical in marijuana is THC or tetrahydrocannabinol. There are hundreds of other toxins in marijuana.



As cultivation methods change, the THC content of marijuana has risen.

There is also a much higher potency form of marijuana on the market called called “sensimilla.” Between 1986 and 2009, the average potency of marijuana increased from 3% THC to almost 10%. In sensimilla, concentrations of THC as high as 37% have been found – that’s 10 times stronger.



As potency goes up, adverse effects like anxiety, depression, psychosis, violent vomiting and addiction also increase.

Marijuana-related visits to emergency rooms have risen from 16,000 visits in 1991 to more than 461,000 in 2010.

Marijuana is not the same drug that it was thirty years ago.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/Fact_Sheets/marijuana_fact_sheet_jw_10-5-10.pdf

https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ondcp/mpmp_report_104.pdf

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19949195>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/frequently-asked-questions-and-facts-about-marijuana>

3

IT LOWERS ABILITY TO LEARN & SUCCEED

Marijuana lowers the abilities a person needs for learning. Unfortunately, the age groups most likely to abuse marijuana are those in their teens or early twenties – the years when a person’s most important education will occur.

Marijuana has been found to cause difficulty with thinking, memory and problem-solving. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health has reported that youth whose grades in school averaged D or below were more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year than youth with good grades.

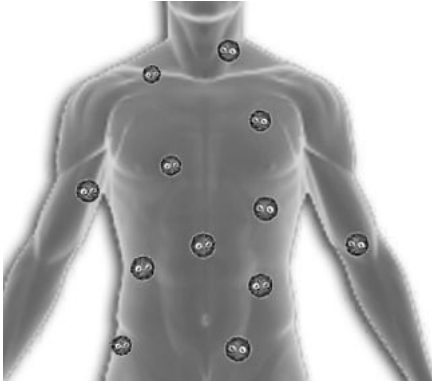
Because THC stores in the body, these effects can be long-lasting and cumulative.

Recent research also indicates that heavy use of marijuana at a young age may result in a permanent reduction in IQ. This research also confirmed problems with attention and memory, even ruling out different educational backgrounds or use of different drugs, when coming to these conclusions.



4

THC STAYS IN THE BODY

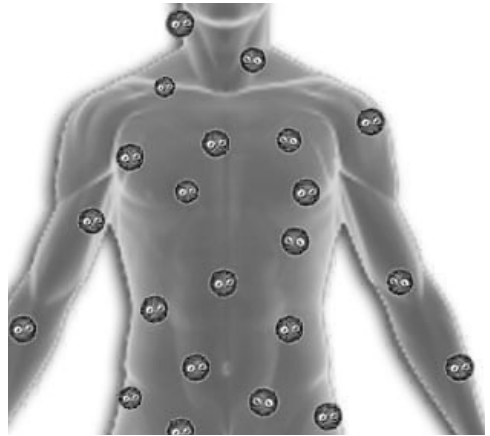


The intoxicating chemicals in marijuana can remain in the body long after a person stops using the drug.

THC dissolves in fat. It is attracted to the fatty tissues in the body. This makes it harder for the body to eliminate all traces of the toxic THC so resi-

dues of the drug remain lodged in the fat indefinitely.

Research has shown that after THC has been stored in the fat cells, food deprivation or high stress can cause a breakdown of these fat cells which releases measurable amounts of THC back into the bloodstream. Therefore, the many effects of marijuana can stay with a person for years and stand in the way of bright, clear thinking and ability to learn.



5

MARIJUANA **IS** ADDICTIVE

Despite what you may hear, marijuana is addictive. About one marijuana user out of nine will become addicted to the drug. But when a person begins abusing this drug in his (or her) teenage years, he has a one in six chance of becoming dependent on this drug.

What does it mean to be dependent on marijuana? It means you have developed a tolerance to the drug, so you need to consume a larger amount to get the same effect. It also means that you feel compelled to abuse the drug despite the harm you see happening in your life and that you will suffer cravings and withdrawal symptoms if you try to quit.



The withdrawal symptoms for marijuana include irritability, insomnia, anxiety, nightmares, anger, fluctuating emotions, headaches, depression and loss of appetite.

6

MARIJUANA DOES NOT CURE ANYTHING

The consumption of marijuana does not cure disease. Still, some people promote its use in medical treatment. For example, some people want marijuana to be available to those receiving chemotherapy for cancer or those with AIDS as they often lose their appetites. THC does tend to stimulate one's appetite.



There is no disease that is actually improved by the effects of marijuana. THC may help with **symptoms** of some diseases but there are often other alternatives. For example, to help with loss of appetite, there is a synthetic form of THC available called Marinol[®]. A person can receive the limited benefits of THC by taking Marinol without becoming high or suffering problematic side effects like the increased blood pressure that tends to accompany marijuana use.

It has also been said that marijuana helps people with glaucoma. The National Eye Institute has stated that marijuana is not suitable for this purpose as benefits were brief and the side effects of using the drug were dangerous for people with this condition.

Young people have absolutely no need for so-called “*medical*” marijuana.”

7

MARIJUANA CAN CAUSE DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONAL CHANGES

It has been documented that a chronic marijuana abuser goes through emotional and behavioral changes that result in loss of motivation and ambition. This often results in less socializing with friends and family, abandonment of goals, low energy, and very often, disciplinary problems.



Personal productivity and self-confidence of a chronic marijuana user tend to be low. One study followed the activities of 49 Illinois students who had been expelled from school for marijuana violations. This six-year study found that these students were behind academically, had attendance problems and

had dropped out of extracurricular activities.

A British study found that 21% of marijuana users reported tiredness and low motivation.

8

IT CAN CREATE SEVERE MENTAL & PHYSICAL EFFECTS



The use of marijuana can cause serious mental and physical effects. This becomes more likely when a person uses high dosages or very strong potency marijuana.

According to a study published by the National Institutes of Health, heavy use of high potency marijuana was associated with a higher number of psychotic episodes.

Other studies have shown that young people who smoke marijuana regularly are three times more likely to think about committing suicide and that smokers may also suffer a greater incidence of major depression.

Especially in young people, marijuana abuse can lead to higher levels of anxiety, panic attacks, depression and paranoia.

Physically, high levels of marijuana abuse have resulted in violent and repeated vomiting accompanied by severe stomach pain. To alleviate the pain, drug users sometimes spend hours in hot baths or showers, which seem to be the only remedies other than ceasing marijuana abuse.

9

MARIJUANA ABUSE CREATES SERIOUS RISKS



The abuse of marijuana opens the door to various types of risky behavior. Perhaps the most dangerous of these is the effect marijuana has on one's ability to drive. Marijuana creates

problems both for the person who has just smoked weed and for the chronic smoker.

The drug causes difficulty thinking, problem-solving, concentrating and maintaining attention on driving. Time and distance may be distorted and the person is slower to react, thus accidents are more likely – just as with alcohol.

These changes mean that a driver is going to have a harder time responding appropriately to emergencies or sudden changes. Of course, these changes may also mean a greater chance of accidents or injuries when involved in other activities than driving.

In young people, marijuana use was found to be associated with an increase in risky sexual behavior. Condoms were used less frequently and there was a higher incidence of sexually transmitted diseases.

10

WHAT YOUR KIDS ARE BEING TOLD ABOUT MARIJUANA

What are your children hearing about this drug? What are they seeing in the movies? You can be sure that they are talking to their friends about their drug experiences. Maybe they are even talking to the person selling the drugs.

Like it or not, they must make their own decision about using this drug. So what lines are they hearing?

- It's a natural herb
- "Everybody" is doing it
- It's not addictive
- It's not as damaging as alcohol
- You don't get hung over
- It's medicine
- It calms you down
- Being stoned is fun
- You get more creative when you smoke weed.

In some of these sales lines, there is an element of truth, but it must be balanced against the harm the drug does. You've already learned about marijuana so you can correct their impressions. You can tell them that the drug might provide a little calmness temporarily but that could end in a panic attack or giving up on one's goals. It has proven to reduce one's ability to concentrate, to learn, and can cause one to be more accident-prone.



There are **many** other safer, legal ways to have fun. Tons of fun. Talk with them about this. And everyone is *not* doing it. When your children are fully informed, they will understand why they should say "No thanks" when they are offered the drug.

SOME SIGNS OF MARIJUANA ABUSE

1. Red, bloodshot eyes
2. Euphoria, unwarranted laughter
3. Increase in appetite, especially for sweets
4. Difficulty paying attention or solving problems
5. Memory loss
6. Increased, artificial socialability
7. Lowered inhibitions and poor judgment
8. Dizziness
9. Drowsiness, sedation, slow movement
10. Loss of ambition and motivation
11. Heavy consumption or use of high potency marijuana can result in hallucinations, paranoia, panic attacks or delusions
12. Chronic, heavy use can result in violent vomiting and severe stomach pain that is relieved only by hot baths or showers.

When a person becomes addicted to marijuana or any drug, there will be persistent personality and behavior changes that can't be related to other influences in life. Life goals and favorite activities may be dropped. The drug user may become withdrawn and secretive and may appear depressed.

REAL SOLUTIONS

There are solutions available to you for the problem of marijuana abuse by young people.

First and perhaps most important, TALK to your children about drugs like marijuana. One survey showed that children whose parents talked to them “a lot” about drug abuse were more likely not to abuse drugs.

Take up one fact at a time. After providing the information, let your child ask questions or voice their concerns without criticism. Then take up the next point in another conversation.

Get more information on the specific problems with drug abuse so you can help your child understand the dangers. Narconon can help you know how to proceed.

And try to have dinner with your children five nights a week. A national survey showed that when children have dinner with parents five or more times per week, their relationships with parents are better and this translates into less drug abuse.

Narconon will be bringing you more tools to use in educating your children. Visit www.narconon.org.

You can find more information to help you on these web pages:

General help: <http://www.narconon.org/drug-abuse/parent-center.html>

Drug education materials kit for parents: <http://www.narconon.org/bookstore/narconon-parent-kit.html>

Educational DVD on marijuana: <http://www.narconon.org/bookstore/marijuana-myth-dvd.html>

Free step-by-step guide to talking to your children about drugs: <http://www.narconon.org/media/talking-to-kids.swf>.

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse report *The Importance of Family Dinners*.

**IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WITH A
PROBLEM WITH DRUGS OR ALCOHOL, CALL**

800-775-8750



**Download
this booklet**

www.narconon.org/drug-abuse/parents-get-help.html

**THE NARCONON[®] PROGRAM HAS BEEN
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