



Clear
the
Smoke

Protecting Our Kids from Marijuana

**PREVENT YOUTH
MARIJUANA USE**

TOOLKIT FOR PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS & CAREGIVERS

RISK FACTORS/WARNING SIGNS

WHAT YOU CAN DO/PREVENTION

DID YOU KNOW?

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

RESOURCES

RISK FACTORS



- Lack of parental supervision and/or exposure to marijuana use in the home.
- Exposure to peer pressure or a social environment where there is drug use.
- Easy access to marijuana.
- Belief that there are little or no risks associated with marijuana use.
- Lack of knowledge about marijuana and its effects.
- Past or present use of other substances, including alcohol.

WARNING SIGNS

- Changes in behavior, such as carelessness with grooming, mood changes and deteriorating relationships with family members and friends.
- Changes in academic performance, skipping school, getting in trouble at school.
- Seems unusually giggly and/or uncoordinated.
- Very red, bloodshot eyes or frequently using eye drops.
- Having a hard time remembering things that just happened.
- Drug paraphernalia, including pipes and rolling papers (perhaps claiming they belong to a friend, if confronted)
- Strangely smelling clothes or bedroom.
- Using incense and other deodorizers.
- Clothing or jewelry or posters that promote drug use.
- Unexplained lack of money or a surplus of cash on hand.

NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p22

WHAT YOU CAN DO/PREVENTION



Have the conversation. As some children begin experimenting with alcohol, tobacco and marijuana as young as age 10, it is important to start the conversation early and continue throughout the teen years. Communicate your values and message clearly. Share your concern for their health and safety.

Set a good example. They watch what you do.

Have a clear message. Substance use is not a rite of passage, and not all kids experiment with drugs or alcohol. Teens who use substances have more problems with school, the law, their health and forming healthy relationships. Let them know there are consequences to substance use – both in terms of their health and for breaking your rules.

Use teachable moments and normalize the discussion. Use that time in the car or when there's a story about substance abuse in the news to have the discussion.

Recognize signs of drug use. Significant changes in a teen's personality, motivation, sleep and grooming habits, appearance and friend group can signal a problem. Missing money or items that disappear from the home may mean something's going on. Drug paraphernalia that teens try to explain away as belonging to a friend is a red flag. Don't be afraid to confront your child.

Get help at the first sign of trouble. Parents often underestimate the seriousness of drug use, especially with alcohol and marijuana. Seek out a professional and ask for help. Reach out to a guidance counselor or call a nearby counseling center to access prevention education and intervention services or for an evaluation. Your child's future depends on it.

Rosecrance; Teens & Weed: Still a Big Deal, A Parent's Guide to Talking with a Teenager About Marijuana

DID YOU KNOW?



- ▶ **Marijuana can be addictive.** Research suggests 30 percent of users may develop some form of problem use, which can lead to dependence and addiction. People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are 4 to 7 times more likely than adults to develop problem use.
NIDA; Marijuana, 2016
- ▶ **Marijuana potency has increased.** In the early 1990s, average THC content was roughly 3.7 percent for marijuana; in 2016, it was 13.18 percent. Average marijuana extract contains 50 percent to 80 percent THC.
NIDA; Marijuana, 2017
- ▶ **Perception of harm.** Nearly 70 percent of high school seniors do not view regular marijuana smoking as harmful, while 22.5 percent of high school seniors report using marijuana in the past 30 days.
2016 Monitoring the Future
- ▶ **Marijuana is associated with school failure.** Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memory and learning that can persist after the drug's immediate effects wear off – especially in regular users. Compared with their non-smoking peers, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school.
NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p7
- ▶ **Marijuana is unsafe if you are behind the wheel.** Marijuana compromises judgment and affects many other skills required for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time. Marijuana is the most commonly identified illegal drug in fatal accidents, showing up in the bloodstream of about 14 percent of drivers, sometimes in combination with alcohol or other drugs. By itself, marijuana is believed to roughly double a driver's chance of being in an accident.
NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p6
- ▶ **Marijuana affects mental and emotional development.** Marijuana use can be especially toxic to a developing teenager's brain. It can lead to impaired short-term memory, perception, judgment and motor skills. Regular marijuana use has been associated with depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and personality disturbances.
NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p19,20

TALKING TO YOUR KIDS



Conversations can be a powerful tool parents can use to connect with and protect kids. When tackling a tough topic, such as marijuana, figuring out what to say can be challenging. Here are some sample conversations that may be helpful.

Teens May Say: Michigan has medical marijuana, so if doctors can prescribe weed, it can't hurt me.

Parent Response: Doctors prescribe it for serious medical conditions, but that doesn't make it "good" for you. All drugs have side effects, and all drugs can be harmful if abused, even those that are prescribed by doctors. Besides, it's not legal for you. You have to break the law to get it.

Teens May Say: You're just saying it's bad for me because you don't want me to smoke pot.

Parent Response: You're right. I don't want you smoking pot or making other choices that have a negative impact on your future. Your brain is still developing, and smoking pot changes your brain in a bad way. These changes can lower your IQ and change your ability to remember information. Substance use of any kind means you're more likely to have emotional problems – including depression and anxiety.

Teens May Say: Pot isn't even addictive.

Parent Response: People who want to keep smoking always say that, but research shows marijuana IS addictive. Smoking pot changes the brain – just like other drugs. I'll bet you know kids who obsess about how and when they're going to get high again. Some will steal money or do other things they aren't proud of to get money for it. They might blow off things they used to care about, including school. That's addictive behavior.

Teens May Say: I'm just trying it out, like everybody else my age. It's not like I'm going to smoke weed forever.

Parent Response: Not everybody's doing it. Do you know that the earlier you start smoking pot, the more likely you are to get addicted? The consequences can be deep and long-term. Many studies show that pot smokers don't do as well in life as other people. They get worse grades and drop out of school more often; fewer pot smokers go to college.

Teens May Say: Smoking a little pot doesn't mean I'll end up using heroin.

Parent Response: I hope not! But smoking pot, especially as a teenager, means you are many more times likely to use other drugs. It's just a fact. The more a person gets into smoking pot, the more likely it is they're hanging out with people who also do other drugs. Almost all of the teenagers who go through treatment started out using some combination of nicotine, alcohol and marijuana.

Teens May Say: I'll bet you smoked pot when you were my age! What's the difference?

Parent Response: There is a difference. Marijuana has changed. It's much stronger than it used to be and way more addictive. My job is to protect and teach you. I can tell you that my life is no better because I smoked pot. I admit to making some poor decisions when I was your age, but I made some good ones, too. One of them was moving beyond that risky behavior. I hope you will let me help you make good decisions for your health and safety and your future.

OR I didn't smoke marijuana because I was afraid of where it could lead, and I didn't want to risk getting in trouble with police, school or my parents. And, I didn't want to risk getting addicted. I do know that today's marijuana is far more potent than it was back then, and many other drugs are more available to kids today. As your parent, I want to help you make good decisions.

Rosecrance; Teens & Weed: Still a Big Deal, A Parent's Guide to Talking with a Teenager About Marijuana

RESOURCES



The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

drugfree.org

Oakland Community Health Network

(248) 858-1210 • oaklandchn.org

Mental Health and Substance Use Access Services

(248) 464-6363 non-emergency

Common Ground

Resource & Crisis Helpline • (800) 231-1127

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

drugabuse.gov

Talk Sooner: Helping Parents Prevent Youth Substance Abuse

talksooner.org/drugs/prescription-drugs

NIDA for Teens

teens.drugabuse.gov

Project SAM: Smart Approaches to Marijuana

learnaboutsam.org

There Is No Debate

thereisnodebate.org

About The Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities

The ACHC is an alliance of over nineteen community prevention coalitions serving forty+ local communities. The ACHC is comprised of individuals and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy and drug-free communities.



Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities

(248) 221-7101 • achcmi.org

MYTH

Marijuana is not addictive.

FACT

Recent research has shown that regular marijuana use can lead to dependence. Marijuana use has been shown to be three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than among adults.

MYTH

Marijuana helps treat cancer and other diseases.

FACT

Research shows that marijuana, as a smoked product, has never proven to be medically beneficial. In fact, it is much more likely to harm one's health. The adverse effects of marijuana smoke on the respiratory system would offset any possible benefit.

MYTH

There's not much parents can do to stop their kids from experimenting with marijuana.

FACT

Kids who learn about the risks of drugs from their parents or caregivers are less likely to use drugs than kids who do not. Open communication between parents and children gives young people confidence and helps them make healthy choices.

MYTH

The government sends innocent people to prison for casual marijuana use.

FACT

In most states, possession of an ounce or less of marijuana is a misdemeanor offense, and some states have downgraded simple possession of marijuana to a civil offense, like a traffic violation.

