



The Truth About Marijuana

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

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 2011, nearly 456,000 emergency room visits were related to marijuana use.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. Chronic marijuana use has been linked with depression, anxiety, and an increased risk of schizophrenia in some cases.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 2012, 957,000 people received treatment to kick their marijuana habit.⁵

Before You Risk It...

Know the law. It is illegal to buy or sell marijuana according to federal law. 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, and breathing problems.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 drug 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 2012 survey, 5 out of 6 12- to 17-year-olds have 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 National Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

For more information or references to facts found in this Tips for Teens, go to <http://store.samhsa.gov>.