



Pathway to Prevention

teen use & abuse stops here

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“Marijuana is linked to school failure. Students who use marijuana tend to get lower grades and drop out more often.”

Parent Awareness Report

Marijuana/“Pot”

Marijuana – the most abused illegal substance among youth

The marijuana landscape is changing, and it’s confusing. In some states, *medical* marijuana is legal. In other states, *recreational marijuana use for adults 21 and older* is legal. And in some states, marijuana use is entirely *illegal*. What does marijuana or “pot” mean to your teens? Consider this data from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA):

- Over 45 percent of teens had consumed marijuana by the time they graduated from high school.
- Marijuana is more potent than ever. THC, the psychoactive ingredient in pot, can create euphoria, memory impairment, anxiety, fear, panic, hallucinations, delusions or paranoia.
- The pot of the ‘80s averaged a THC concentration of around 4%. In 2012, pot’s THC concentrations averaged over 14%.
- Teen attitudes towards pot consumption are becoming more lenient, suggesting we’ll see an increase in teen marijuana use.

What are the dangers of using marijuana?

Marijuana can permanently damage the developing teen brain.

The human brain develops until the mid-20s and is especially vulnerable to marijuana use during this time of “plasticity.” One study showed that people who started smoking marijuana heavily in their teens and continued to smoke regularly lost an average of eight IQ points between ages 13 and 38. Even if they quit marijuana as adults, the lost mental abilities did not fully return. Those who started smoking marijuana as adults did not show significant declines in IQ, which suggests that the age at first use influences marijuana’s long-term impact.

Marijuana is linked to school failure.

Attention, retention, motivation, and memory are negatively impacted by marijuana use. Students who use marijuana tend to get **lower grades** and **drop out more often** than those who don’t, according to research from NIDA.

Drugged driving can be deadly.

Driving under the influence of drugs can impair driver attention, slow down reaction time, alter perception and impact judgment. An unsophisticated, young driver is

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especially vulnerable to these impairments. NIDA reports that driving under the influence of marijuana roughly doubles the odds of a being in an accident.

Marijuana can be addictive, especially if you start using at an early age. Research from NIDA suggests that:

- Generally, about 1 in 11 people who consume pot become chemically-dependent on marijuana.
- But **one in six people who start using pot as teens becomes addicted**. Again, the person’s age at first use seems to play a role in how damaging marijuana can be. Deferring use appears to reduce the risks.

How and why do people use marijuana?

Pot is a leafy plant that can be smoked in cigarettes or pipes. THC can also be extracted and then condensed into oily or waxy concentrates that are smoked. Pot can also be eaten, and there is a growing market for “edibles” like candies and baked goods that contain THC.

Teens might use pot for a variety of reasons:

- Natural curiosity
- Desire to “fit in” or peer pressure
- As a coping mechanism for anxiety or depression
- Boredom
- Poor role models set by friends, siblings or parents

What are some clues that a teen is using pot? Look for:

- Eye drops, air fresheners, rolling papers, pipes, matches or lighters in your teen’s possession.
- Burn marks on clothes or car upholstery.
- The standard hallmarks of drug use or abuse, including declines in school performance, personality or behavioral changes, new friends, accidents or altercations, job loss, or missing money or valuables.

Parents, seize your power

Parents are powerful and influential. **Talking openly and often** with your teens about the risks can help reduce the chances that they will use marijuana or other drugs or alcohol.



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