

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

MARIJUANA PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Kids and Marijuana: The Facts

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among America's youth.¹ Among kids who use drugs, approximately 60 percent use marijuana.² Twice as many 8th graders today have tried marijuana compared to a decade ago, from 10.2 percent in 1991 to 20.4 percent in 2001.³

A government report shows that the younger children are when they first use marijuana, the more likely they are to become dependent on drugs as adults.⁴

Marijuana is Addictive

- Research has now established that marijuana is addictive.⁵ In fact, more kids enter treatment each year for marijuana than for all other illicit drugs combined.⁶
- Sixty percent of teens currently in drug treatment have a primary marijuana diagnosis.⁷
- Today's marijuana is more potent and its effects can be more intense.⁸

Marijuana Hurts Young Bodies and Minds and Is Linked to Risky Behaviors

- **The brain.** Smoking marijuana leads to changes in the brain that are like those caused by cocaine, heroin and alcohol.⁹
- **Lung damage.** Regular marijuana users often develop breathing problems including chronic coughing and wheezing. Asthma is a common childhood disease. Smoking marijuana makes any lung condition like asthma worse.
- **Mental health.** For young users, marijuana can lead to increased anxiety, panic attacks, depression and other mental health problems. One study found that adolescents associated social withdrawal, anxiety and depression, attention problems and thoughts of suicide with past-year marijuana use.¹⁰
- **Risky behavior.** According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, adolescents age 12 to 17 who use marijuana weekly are nine times more likely than non-users to experiment with illegal drugs or alcohol, five times more likely to steal and nearly four times more likely to engage in violence.¹¹

Marijuana Affects Learning and Academic Achievement and Impairs Driving

- Researchers have found that heavy marijuana use impairs the ability of young people to concentrate and retain information.¹² This may be especially problematic during teens' peak learning years, when their brains are still developing.
- Marijuana affects alertness, concentration, perception, coordination and reaction time, many of the skills required for safe driving and other tasks. These effects can last up to 24 hours after smoking marijuana. Marijuana use can also make it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road.¹³

Parents Can Make a Difference

- Parents are the most powerful influence on their kids when it comes to drugs. Two-thirds of youth ages 13-17 say losing their parents' respect is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs.¹⁴
- In 2000, 31 percent of youth whose parents did not strongly disapprove reported use of an illicit drug in the past month.¹⁵

¹ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2001

² National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2000

³ Monitoring the Future, 2001

⁴ "Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns and Implications," SAMHSA 2002

⁵ National Institute on Drug Abuse. www.drugabuse.gov/drugpages/marijuana.htm Facts for Teens

⁶ "Treatment Episodes Data Set 1994-1999: National Admissions to Substance Abuse Treatment Services," SAMHSA, October 2001

⁷ SAMHSA, TEDS, 2001. Fifty-seven percent of youth admissions were referrals through the court system.

⁸ Marijuana Potency Monitoring Project, University of Mississippi, 2000

⁹ *Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know*, Revised, NIDA, November 1998

¹⁰ Adolescents age 12 to 17 who smoke marijuana weekly are three times more likely to have thoughts about committing suicide. "Adolescent Self-Reported Behaviors and their Association with Marijuana Use," SAMHSA, 1998. Based on data from the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1994-1996

¹¹ Adolescent Self-Reported Behaviors, SAMHSA, 1998

¹² NIDA InfoFax Marijuana 13551

¹³ *Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know*, Revised, NIDA, November 1998

¹⁴ Partnership for a Drug-Free America, "Partnership Attitude Tracking Study," 1999.

¹⁵ National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 2000