

TALK ABOUT MARIJUANA

A TIP SHEET FOR STUDENTS

WHAT IS MARIJUANA AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

All forms of marijuana are mind-altering (psychoactive).¹ In other words, they change how the brain works. Marijuana contains more than 400 chemicals, including THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). Since THC is the main active chemical in marijuana, the amount of THC in marijuana determines its strength or potency and therefore its effects. The THC content of marijuana has been increasing since the 1980s.

ADDICTION

Marijuana is addictive.¹ Of course, not everyone who smokes marijuana will become addicted—that depends on a whole bunch of factors—including your family history (genes), the age you start using, whether you also use other drugs, your family and peer relationships, success in school, and so on. Repeated marijuana use can lead to addiction—which means that people have trouble controlling

their drug use and often cannot stop even though they want to. Research shows that approximately 9 percent, or about 1 in 11, of those who use marijuana will become addicted. This rate increases to 17 percent, or about 1 in 6, if you start in your teens, and goes up to 25–50 percent among daily users.

SCHOOL

Marijuana is linked to school failure.² Marijuana's negative effects on attention, memory, and learning can last for days and sometimes weeks—especially if you use it often. Someone who smokes marijuana daily may have a 'dimmed-down' brain most or all of the time. Compared with their peers who don't use, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely

to drop out of high school. Research even shows that it can lower your IQ if you smoke it regularly in your teen years. Also, longtime marijuana users themselves report being less satisfied with their lives, having memory and relationship problems, poorer mental and physical health, lower salaries, and less career success.

PSYCHOSIS/PANIC

High doses of marijuana can cause psychosis or panic when you're high.³ Some people experience an acute psychotic reaction (disturbed perceptions and thoughts, paranoia) or panic attacks while under the influence of marijuana. This usually goes away as the drug's effects wear off. Scientists do not yet know if marijuana use causes lasting mental illness, although it can worsen psychotic symptoms in people who already have the mental illness schizophrenia, and it can increase the risk of long-lasting psychosis in some people.

HOW IS MARIJUANA LIKELY TO AFFECT YOU?

Learning: Marijuana's effects on attention and memory make it difficult to learn something new or do complex tasks that require focus and concentration.¹

Sports: Marijuana affects timing, movement, and coordination, which can harm athletic performance.¹

Judgment: Marijuana, like most abused substances, can alter judgment. This can lead to risky behaviors that can expose the user to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.¹

HEAVY MARIJUANA USE BY TEENS IS LINKED TO⁴:

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES



LOWER grades and exam scores



LESS likely to graduate from High School or college



LESS likely to enroll in college

LIFE OUTCOMES



LOWER satisfaction with life



MORE LIKELY to earn a **lower** income



MORE LIKELY to be unemployed



MORE LIKELY to have mental health issues as an adult

1. NSDUH, SAMSHA, 2014; 2. MTF Survey; 3. Meier et al 2012; 4. MTF Survey; Cobb, Clark et al, 2013; Slins et al 2014; Tucker et al 2005; Home et al. 2014; Vo cow et a 2014; Ferosson and Boden 2008; Brooks et 3 2013