



# MARIJUANA FACTS PARENTS NEED TO KNOW TALKING TO YOUR KIDS: COMMUNICATING THE RISKS

## A Parent Conversation Guide

- Although NIDA's annual Monitoring the Future survey shows that daily marijuana use in teens is mostly steady, the survey also shows that as cigarette smoking rates drop, daily marijuana smoking has become generally more common than daily cigarette smoking among teens. By the time they graduate high school, about 45 percent of teens have tried marijuana at least once in their lifetime, a rate that has remained relatively steady for the past two decades. The survey also reports that high school seniors in states with medical marijuana laws are more likely to have vaped marijuana and consumed marijuana edibles than their counterparts in states without such laws.
- Additionally, the number of teens who think marijuana use is harmful is declining. This is concerning because there is growing scientific evidence that heavy, regular use of marijuana that begins during the teen years can interfere with aspects of functioning and well-being.
- Survey results show that we still have a long way to go in our efforts to prevent teen marijuana use and avoid the toll it can take on a young person's life. NIDA recognizes that parents have an important role in this effort and can strongly influence their children's attitudes and behaviors. However, the subject of marijuana use has become increasingly difficult to discuss—in part because of the mixed messages being sent by the passage of medical marijuana laws and legalization of marijuana in some states. In addition, many parents may have used marijuana when they were younger, which could make it more challenging to discuss openly or set rules about its use.
- Talking to our children about drug use isn't always easy, but it is crucial. We are pleased to offer this short guide to review with your children. We have a similar booklet, called Marijuana: Facts for Teens, that you can also share. Sometimes, just beginning the conversation is the hardest part. I hope these booklets can help.



**DID YOU  
KNOW ?**

**Dabs or dabbing are the names for the use of concentrated butane hash oil (or BHO). It is a relatively new method of administering/ingesting cannabis that involves the inhalation of highly concentrated tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the main active chemical in cannabis.**



## Why do young people use marijuana?

Young people start using marijuana for many reasons. Curiosity, peer pressure, and the desire to fit in with friends are common ones. Those who have already begun to smoke cigarettes or use alcohol, or who have untreated mental health conditions (such as depression, anxiety, or ADHD), or who have experienced trauma are at increased risk for marijuana use.

For some, drug use begins as a means of coping with anxiety, anger, depression, or boredom. But, in fact, being high can be a way of simply avoiding the problems and challenges of growing up. Parents, grandparents, and older siblings are models that children follow, and research suggests that family members' use of alcohol and drugs plays a strong role in whether a young person starts using drugs. Indeed, all aspects of a teen's environment—home, school, and community—can influence if he or she will try drugs.



## How can I prevent my child from using marijuana?

There is no quick or simple solution for preventing teen drug use. But research shows parents have a big influence on their teens, even when it doesn't seem that way. Talk openly with your children and stay actively engaged in their lives.

To help you get started, the next section provides some key points about marijuana research findings that you can share with your kids to help them sort out fact from myth and help them make the best decisions they can.



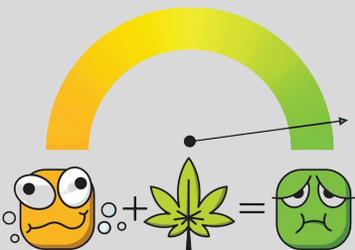
## Did you know, Marijuana can be addictive?

Despite common belief, repeated marijuana use can lead to addiction, which means that people can have trouble quitting, even if it is having a negative impact on their lives. Research suggests that about 30 percent of people who use marijuana have some level of marijuana use disorder even if they are not yet addicted. People who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are more likely to develop a marijuana use disorder than adults. Among youth receiving substance use disorder treatment, marijuana accounts for the largest percentage of admissions—almost 50 percent among those 12 to 17 years old.

ADDICTION

## Marijuana is unsafe if you're behind the wheel.

Marijuana impairs judgment and many other skills needed for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination, and reaction time. Marijuana use makes it difficult to judge distances and react to signals and sounds on the road. Marijuana is the most commonly identified illegal drug in deadly crashes, sometimes in combination with alcohol or other drugs. By itself, marijuana is thought to roughly double a driver's chances of being in a crash, and the combination of marijuana and even small amounts of alcohol is even more dangerous—more so than either substance alone.



## Marijuana is linked to school failure, lower income, and poorer quality of life.

Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memory, and learning that can persist after the drug's immediate effects wear off—especially in people who use regularly. Someone who uses marijuana daily may be functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time. Compared with their nonsmoking peers, students who use marijuana are more likely to drop out of high school. People who use marijuana regularly for a long time report decreased overall life satisfaction, including poorer mental and physical health, memory and relationship problems, lower salaries, and less career success.



**Regular marijuana use affects the brain and leads to impaired memory, judgment, and motor skills.**



## So, what is marijuana? What is cannabis?

Marijuana refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds from the Cannabis sativa or Cannabis indica plant. The terms cannabis and marijuana are often used interchangeably. Extracts from the plant can be made into hash oil or wax. Cannabis products contain the mind-altering chemical delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). They can also contain more than 400 other chemicals.



**Recently, they are even finding FENTANYL laced into marijuana....**

## What are marijuana's effects on the brain, body, and behavior?

### Short-term effects (while using or right after using)

- learning, attention, and memory problems
- distorted perception (sights, sounds, time, touch)
- poor coordination and motor skills
- increased heart rate
- anxiety, paranoia
- psychosis (not common)

### Long-term effects (effects of repeated use)

- risk of marijuana addiction
- long-term learning and memory problems
- if heavy use begins during youth
- risk for chronic cough, bronchitis
- risk of schizophrenia in some people with higher genetic risk
- in rare cases, risk of recurrent episodes of severe nausea and vomiting

### DID YOU KNOW?

**Marijuana can be addictive. People who begin using before 18 are more likely to develop marijuana use disorder than adults.**

## What determines how marijuana affects an individual?

Like any other drug, marijuana's effects on a person depends on many factors, including the person's previous experience with the drug or other drugs, biology (e.g., genes), how the drug is taken, and the drug's potency (its strength).

## How harmful is K2/Spice (or "synthetic cannabinoids")?

Synthetic cannabinoids, which are sometimes also called K2 or Spice, consist of many human-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material to be smoked, or sold as liquids to be inhaled in e-vaporizers.

These chemicals are called cannabinoids because they have chemicals that act on the same brain cell receptors as THC, but are often much more powerful and unpredictable. Because of this similarity, synthetic cannabinoids are sometimes misleadingly called "synthetic marijuana" (or "fake weed"), and are often labeled "not fit for human consumption." Many are now illegal, but their manufacturers are constantly creating new chemical compounds to sidestep legal restrictions. Their effects, like the ingredients, often vary, but emergency rooms report large numbers of young people appearing with rapid heart rates, vomiting, and negative mental responses including hallucinations after using these substances. Some states are reporting an increased number of overdose cases involving synthetic cannabinoid products where users are experiencing severe bleeding, likely due to product contamination. Even Fentanyl has been found in synthetic cannabinoids/marijuana.



**Because edibles contain marijuana are often unlabeled or poorly labeled, teens can use too much waiting for the high and end up in the emergency room with side effects.**



# STARTING THE CONVERSATION

As this guide has shown, marijuana use can affect the health and well-being of children and teens at a critical point in their lives—when they are growing, learning, maturing, and laying the foundation for their adult years.



As a parent, your children look to you for help and guidance in working out problems and in making decisions, including the decision not to use drugs. Even if you have used drugs in the past, you can have an open conversation about the dangers. Whether or not you tell your child about your past drug use is a personal decision. But experience can better equip us to teach others by drawing on the value of past mistakes. You can explain that marijuana is significantly more potent now and that we now know a lot more about the potential harmful effects of marijuana on the developing brain.

## QUICK TIPS



## Tips for Parents

- Be a good listener.
- Set clear expectations about drug and alcohol use, including real consequences for not following family rules.
- Help your child deal with peer pressure to use drugs.
- Get to know your child's friends and their parents.
- Monitor your child's whereabouts.
- Supervise teen activities.
- Talk to your child often.

Help your teen create an "exit plan" in case he or she is offered or faced with a difficult decision about marijuana. Peer pressure can be powerful, so coming up with realistic action steps and practicing them together in a safe environment will prepare and empower your teen to make good choices when it matters.



PLAN

## TAKE ACTION- Use these tips to talk with your teen:

- Check in frequently to see how they are doing
- Choose informal times to talk, such as in the car, during dinner, or while watching TV
- Be clear and consistent about your expectations regarding marijuana and other drug use
- Establish family agreements together for social and extracurricular activities
- Let them know you care and are always there for them
- Continue talking with your teens as they get older

