

# Marijuana and it's affects on teens



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Thousands of young teens do it; over 140 million people worldwide use it. What could it be? It is called Marijuana and it is the most widely used illegal drug in the United States today, Over 46 percent of people aged 12 and older have admitted to using marijuana at least once in their lifetime. (1) Marijuana is considered a major gateway drug in teens which means after using marijuana it often leads to doing other kinds of drugs. Marijuana seems to alter the brain when used and heavy marijuana use may damage the developing brain in teens and it's practically just as bad as cigarettes are for you.

Effects from marijuana use include decreased hand eye coordination, damage to your lungs and throat, and increased risk of upper respiratory problems. Some teens and adults may think marijuana use is cool but it can do serious damage to your body when used. Many parents and people in general have questions what is it and where does it come from? Some of you may already know but marijuana is a type of plant derived from the Middle East which comes in the color of green or brown.

The marijuana plant produces leaves, stems, and buds which contain THC. THC stands for tetrahydrocannabinol, and is what causes the " high" feelings and the mind changing effect after this chemical enters the body. (2) The effects such as short-term memory loss can occur; also misjudgment can be a major factor especially when making decisions while driving. People are killed in car accidents every year due to the lack of perception and misjudgment people have when they decide to use marijuana.

There are three major ways of using Marijuana it can be consumed in the form of a pill which is prescribed by a doctor, you can make it a special way

in your food and eat it or even make it liquid from and drink it but the most common way of using marijuana is by smoking it through a pipe, water pipe, cigar or even in a cigarette form. Marijuana can be grown and found all over the world. In some places marijuana also grows wildy. After the user inhales this drug it enters the body and begins to make its way into the blood stream, when it is in your lood stream it has access to the whole body.

The most affected part of your body especially when you are young is the brain. When it is in your brain it taps into the brains receptors and then THC triggers brain cells to release the chemical dopamine. This chemical is only meant to be released in regulated doses. For instance when you accomplish an important task at your work and your boss highly complements you on it, that smile that you cannot control is the release of dopamine. When this chemical dopamine is abused and released in high amounts, your body can not refill it very quickly.

When your body is derived from dopamine it causes depression, anxiety and sadness until it is replenished. Effects can also be unpredictable when marijuana is used in combination with other drugs, which unfortunately sometimes these effects can be deadly. Abusers of marijuana with heart conditions can have severe heart problems down the road. When inhaled into the system the bronchial passages in become enlarged because they actually become relaxed and then blood vessels in your eyes start to expand as well causing the blood shot eyes.

As all this is happening the heart is rapidly trying to supply more blood to these enlarged blood vessels. This process can speed the heart up from 70 to 80 beats per minute straight up to 160 beats per minute(3), and can

cause a heart attack. When THC is present in one's system, it searches for both brain cells, and neurons with specific kinds of receptors called cannabanoid receptors and those are what THC latches on to. We have high concentrations of cannabinoid receptors; these are located in the cerebellum, cerebral cortex, and hippocampus, which cause one's balance and coordination to be greatly affected when marijuana is smoked.

The Cerebellum is the region of the brain that plays an important role in motor control and hand eye coordination which is your balance, and this could greatly affect one's driving abilities. Research shows that drivers on marijuana have slower reaction times, impaired judgment, and problems responding to signals and sounds. (8) The Cerebral Cortex is the outer layer of the cerebellum which plays a key role in memory, attention, perceptual awareness, thought, language, and consciousness. This can be hard for young people to go to school and retain the information given if they are abusing marijuana.

The hippocampus works very closely with the Cerebral Cortex and plays a major role in long term memory and spatial navigation, and this area is greatly affected by the use of marijuana. Smoking marijuana disrupts normal functioning of the brain and often leads to problems studying and doing good in school, learning new things, and recalling recent events. These THC effects can also cause disaster on the road for teens trying to progress in life. Long-term effects of marijuana on daily users can cause problems with reproduction.

For males it can lower sperm count tremendously and in some cases can become sterile. Anyhow, as for females it can make having a baby hard, and

can cause pre-mature birth. So it is harmful to adults and children, let us just say it is harmful in general for anyone's health. When marijuana when smoked it leaves the person in a state of extreme relaxation or " high" which many teens like and that is mainly the reason why teens do it. Enough of this daily usage will lead the user to need more and more just to get higher.

They need that feeling of reaching a better high than the one before. Teenagers all mistakenly believe that " everybody's doing it" and their peers pressure them into trying it. Well, they need to check the facts again and not go by what everyone is saying, because that's just not true. Marijuana use declined from the late 1990s through 2007, with a decrease in past-year use of more than 20 percent in all three grades combined from 2000 to 2007. Although, Marijuana use remains at very high levels, as the most commonly used illegal drug.

According to a 2008 survey, called Monitoring the Future, about 6 percent of 8th-graders, 14 percent of 10th-graders, and 19 percent of 12th-graders had used marijuana in the month before the survey. (4) Is marijuana a gateway drug for teens? Many can say that marijuana leads to other hardcore drugs such as heroin, ecstasy, acid, cocaine, and whatever else is out there. Some studies that were done show that most heroin addicts or other hardcore drug addicts never even smoked marijuana, it all started with alcohol abuse.

This year, past year marijuana use among eighth grade through twelfth grade students has increased and declined for tenth graders, but none of the changes were very large or statistically noticeable. The good thing is that, current cigarette smoking did drop significantly for tenth graders. Either way it is dopamine stimulant and anyone looking for that high will quite possibly

take any route to get it. Even though marijuana is not chemically addictive, majority of heavy users can become psychologically addicted.

Smoking is particularly harmful for teens because their bodies are still growing and changing and this messes up that process. Although we know this drug is very harmful when smoked or eaten but it is proven scientifically that it does not cause psychological damage but only temporarily a difference in behavior. Users can experience feelings of great panic when smoking and this can also cause the heart rate to sky rocket, especially in adults. Many people can tend to feel very paranoid as if the world is out to get them and it can cause problems with immediate family as well as it causing difficulty functioning in daily life like that.

In some cases people experience temporary toxic psychosis which means like “ temporary loss of contact with reality” which can be a very bad thing to one’s health and mental state. This is when the user literally loses all touch with reality and can become what we know as “ stoned”, completely oblivious to the world. If someone decided to drive with this type of condition they could cause serious harm to someone else’s life and even their own life. Marijuana not only calms you down but destroys your inner self and personality. Under U. S. law since 1970, marijuana has been a Schedule I controlled substance. 5) This means that the drug has no scientifically approved medical use at this time. Although, Medications that contain synthetic THC in pill form are often used for nauseated chemotherapy patients in doctors’ offices and Marijuana is also used to stimulate appetite for patients that do not have an appetite due to the AIDS or HIV virus. So it is kind of used for medical use and these teenagers do not understand that it is

not to be used for fun. Also, Marijuana smoke contains majority of the same cancer-causing compounds as tobacco, sometimes in higher concentrations.

Teens who smoke cigarettes are fourteen times more likely to try marijuana than those who don't smoke cigarettes. Studies show that someone who smokes five joints per day may be taking in as many cancer-causing chemicals as someone who smokes a full pack of cigarettes every day. Like tobacco smoke marijuana contains irritants and carcinogens. Unlike tobacco smokers marijuana smokers smoke much less inhaling much less smoke as a result lessening their chances of serious lung damage. (6) Unlike heavy tobacco users, marijuana smokers exhibit no obstruction of the lungs small airway.

This indicates that people who smoke marijuana will not develop emphysema from smoking marijuana. (7) Marijuana use is better than smoking cigarettes to your health but it is still bad and destroys other parts of your body. Marijuana affects the most important part of your body, so think smart and healthy. Marijuana not only affects your judgment and personality, but it hurts the brain and your way of thinking. Understand that marijuana only releases good feelings for a short period of time, so if you're feeling down those feelings will come back as soon as the effects wear off.

Just think of it as your putting your feelings in a box but sooner or later that box is going to open and your feelings will come back. It is not the answer to your problems and it will not fix anything, only make matters worse. So, when your with your friends and they say it is what everyone is doing be the smart person and walk away, your saving your future. Many people become psychologically addicted, you do not want to become that person, needing it

every single day to function in life's surroundings. Just remember to think before you smoke anything, it is disrespecting yourself and it's very dangerous to your health.