

# Marijuana within today's society

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There has been a long term controversy over the legalization of Marijuana in the United State.

Some believe it should be legal in the United States because it could “ create a source of additional tax revenues and police and courts would be freed up for more serious crimes”. Others believe it should be an illegal drug because of its health risks. Marijuana should remain illegal in the United States as a schedule I controlled substance due to the many physical and psychological effects it has on it's users as well as the harmful effects it has on today's society. Marijuana acts on the brains reward system which governs the response to pleasurable things. Users of marijuana seek the euphoric feeling or “ high” caused by the drug. THC enters the body and creates the high the marijuana user seeks by stimulating brain cells to release dopamine, which is a chemical found in the brain. Marijuana has many effects on the body, both short and long, though there is limited research on the long lasting effects of marijuana use.

The acute effects present during intoxication may include but are not limited to impairments to the short memory, attention, judgment, coordination, balance and other cognitive functions. Smoking marijuana may also distort the user's depth perception. The heart rate of a person during their intoxication increases as well as their blood pressure. Just seconds after inhaling marijuana smoke the persons bronchial passages enlarge and relax. Blood vessels in the eye expand which commonly makes the user's eyes look red or bloodshot. Users begin to feel relaxed, have heightened sensory perception, and altered perception of time. A User may laugh and have an increase in appetite after smoking marijuana.

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Large doses of marijuana sometimes lead to acute psychosis including hallucinations, delusions or a loss of sense of personal identity. Some users may have psychotic episodes such as anxiety, fear, distrust, panic and paranoia. After the euphoric feeling subsides or fades the person may feel depressed or tired. There is limited knowledge or information on the long term effects of smoking marijuana. Some studies suggest that effects on the brain can build up and deteriorate critical life skills over time. Effects often are worse for people with mental disorders, or simply by virtue of the normal aging process. Schizophrenia like disorders have been associated with the use of marijuana in vulnerable individuals.

Long term users may have sleep impairment or suffer from insomnia. Chronic abuse of marijuana increases the risk of chronic cough or bronchitis. Smoking Marijuana has the same, if not worse, respiratory problems as tobacco, such as frequent acute chest illness and a risk of lung infection. Using Marijuana has the potential to create cancer of the lungs and other parts of the respiratory tract because marijuana contains irritants and carcinogens up to 70% more than tobacco smoke. Some believe that marijuana may impair the ability to form new memories and focus which makes learning, doing complicated tasks, participating in athletics and driving difficult. The effects of marijuana use can last days or even weeks after the acute effects wear off, which mean a daily user is functioning at a reduced intellectual level most or all of the time. Contrary to popular belief marijuana is an addictive drug.

The use of marijuana has many harmful effects to the users but it also affects others who do not participate in the use of marijuana. The World Health Organization ranks the United States first among 17 European and North America countries for prevalent use of marijuana. In 2008, 2.2 million Americans used marijuana for the first time and greater than half were under the age of 18. Because marijuana affects brain systems that are still maturing through young adulthood, its use by teens may have a negative effect on their development. 42% of United States high school graduates have tried marijuana. Marijuana smoking students compared to non-marijuana smoking students tend to have lower grades and a higher dropout rate.

It is easily assumed that while being under the influence of marijuana driving would become more difficult because of the loss of coordination, balance and the perception of depth. The National Highway Traffic Administration issued a report stating that 18% of motor vehicle driver's deaths involved drugs other than alcohol. 6.8% of drivers, mostly under the age of 35, involved in accidents tested positive for THC. There are many questions about the use of marijuana while a woman is pregnant. Even low amounts of THC, when administered during the prenatal period, could have profound and long lasting consequences on the brain and behavior of the unborn child. Marijuana exposed children show gaps in problem solving, memory and ability to remain attentive in a classroom setting.

Marijuana also affects places of employment. In a study among postal workers, employees who tested positive for marijuana on a pre-employment

urine drug test had 55% more industrial accidents, 85% more injuries and a 75% increase in absenteeism compared to those who tested negative for marijuana. There is a higher job turn over rate for people who choose to use marijuana and be employed. Employees who use marijuana tend to have more absences, tardiness, accidents and worker compensation claims.

Marijuana use has adverse physical, mental, emotional and behavior effects. It causes students to perform poorly in school. Marijuana use affects many of it's users at their place of employment due to being absent and causing more accidents in the work place making it unsafe for others.

Many children are born with defects and behavior problems due to the poor judgment of their mothers, who partook in the use of marijuana during the prenatal period. The roads in America are polluted with drivers under the influence of marijuana whose judgment and motor skills are impaired.

Marijuana should remain illegal in the United States due to the harmful effects on its users as well as innocent bystanders.