

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY CHILD HAS BEEN USING MARIJUANA?

CAN A PERSON BECOME ADDICTED TO MARIJUANA?

WHAT ARE THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE?

HOW DOES MARIJUANA AFFECT DRIVING?

HOW LONG DOES MARIJUANA STAY IN THE BODY?

DOES MARIJUANA LEAD TO THE USE OF OTHER DRUGS?

HOW MANY TEENS USE MARIJUANA?

CAN MARIJUANA AFFECT MY CHILD'S GRADES?

CAN A PERSON WHO USES MARIJUANA HAVE A BAD REACTION?

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA?

MARIJUANA: FACTS PARENTS NEED TO KNOW

Revised

HOW CAN I PREVENT MY CHILD FROM GETTING INVOLVED WITH MARIJUANA?

WHAT ABOUT EFFECTS ON PREGNANCY?

IS MARIJUANA USE LINKED TO LOSS OF MOTIVATION?

HOW IS MARIJUANA USED?

WHAT ARE THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA USE?

WHAT DOES MARIJUANA DO TO THE BRAIN?

IS MARIJUANA MEDICINE?

ARE THERE TREATMENTS FOR PEOPLE ADDICTED TO MARIJUANA?

A Letter to Parents

We at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) are pleased to offer two short guides for parents and their children to review the scientific facts about marijuana: (1) [*Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know*](#) and (2) [*Marijuana: Facts for Teens*](#). Although it's best to talk about drugs when children are young—when drug use often begins—it's never too late to start the conversation.

Marijuana remains the most used illegal substance among youth. By the time they graduate from high school, about 45 percent of U.S. teens will have tried marijuana at least once in their lifetime. In 2015, nearly 22 percent of high school seniors reported current marijuana use, and 6 percent used marijuana daily. The annual Monitoring the Future survey has been tracking teen attitudes and drug use since 1975. Currently, 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 may lower a person's IQ and interfere with other aspects of functioning and well-being. The good news is that marijuana use did not increase significantly among youth from 2010 to 2015.

Survey results show that we still have a long way to go in our efforts to prevent 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 talk about—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 talking openly and setting rules about its use more difficult.

Talking to our children about drug use isn't always easy, but it is crucial. You can also get involved in your community and seek out drug abuse prevention programs that you and your child can participate in together. Sometimes, just beginning the conversation is the hardest part. I hope these booklets can help.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Volkow', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.
Director
National Institute on Drug Abuse

Contents

A Letter to Parents	1
I. Talking to Your Kids: Communicating the Risks	4
<i>Introduction</i>	5
Why do young people use marijuana?	5
How can I prevent my child from using marijuana?	5
<i>Did you know?</i>	6
Marijuana can be addictive	6
Marijuana is unsafe if you're behind the wheel	6
Marijuana is linked to lower grades, school failure, and poorer quality of life	7
Marijuana is linked to some mental illnesses	7
II. Want to Know More? Some FAQs About Marijuana	8
What is marijuana? Are there different kinds?	9
How do people use marijuana?	9
How many teens use marijuana?	9
How does marijuana work?	10
What are marijuana's short-term effects?	11
What determines how marijuana affects a person?	12
How important is marijuana potency?	12
Does using marijuana lead to other drug use?	12
Does smoking marijuana cause lung cancer?	15
Can marijuana produce withdrawal symptoms when someone quits?	15
How harmful is K2/Spice (or "synthetic marijuana")?	16
Are there treatments for people addicted to marijuana?	16
What are other risks related to marijuana that my child should know?	19
Is marijuana medicine?	20
How can I tell if my child has been using marijuana?	23
III. Starting the Conversation	24
IV. Other Useful Resources	26



III. 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.

Greater acceptance of marijuana use, compared with use of other illegal drugs, continues to be the basis of differing opinions about its dangers, legal status, and potential value. The ongoing public debate about medical marijuana may complicate your discussion. Even so, be certain the discussion focuses on how much you care about your child's health.

Whether or not marijuana becomes legal for adult use or allowed for medical use, it can be harmful for teens and can alter the course of a young life, preventing a person from reaching his or her full potential. That's reason enough to have this sometimes difficult conversation with your children. We hope this guide encourages and helps parents to begin the dialogue and, more importantly, to keep the channels of communication open.



IV. Other Useful Resources

There are numerous resources, many right in your own community, where you can get information to help you talk to your children about drugs. Consult your local library, school, or community service organization. You may also contact the government organizations listed below.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

NIDA, as part of the National Institutes of Health, offers an extensive collection of publications, videos, and educational materials to help parents talk to their children about drug use. Resources include:

- **Family Checkup** (www.drugabuse.gov/family-checkup), which provides parents with research-based skills, including conversation tips on video, to help keep their children drug free
- **Drugs: Shatter the Myths** (www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-shatter-myths), which parents can give to their teens to help answer frequently asked questions about drugs and drug abuse
- **Step-by-Step Guide** (www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/treatment/what-to-do-if-your-teen-or-young-adult-has-problem-drugs), which offers guidance on what parents can do if their teen or young adult has a drug use problem

Visit our Parents & Educators page (www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators) for a list of other materials.

NIDA has more information about marijuana and other drugs on both our main website and our NIDA for Teens site: www.drugabuse.gov and www.teens.drugabuse.gov.

Select NIDA publications are available free of charge through the NIDA DRUGPUBS Research Dissemination Center.

website: <https://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov>

email: drugpubs@nida.nih.gov

phone: 1.877.NIDA.NIH (1.877.643.2644) or 240.645.0228

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

Visit NIAAA at www.niaaa.nih.gov for information about a variety of alcohol-related issues, which frequently intersect with other drug use problems.

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

NIMH (www.nimh.nih.gov) provides the latest research findings and numerous other resources covering a variety of mental health disorders, which often co-occur with drug abuse.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA's treatment locator (<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>) can help you find a drug abuse or alcohol treatment program near you. Visit www.samhsa.gov for more information about drug abuse prevention and treatment policies, programs, and services.

Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)

Visit www.dea.gov for information about various drugs, controlled substances laws (including drug scheduling), and U.S. regulations. The DEA offers two resources specifically intended for parents and teens:

- Get Smart About Drugs: www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com
- Just Think Twice: www.justthinktwice.com

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.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

NIH Publication No. 16-4036

Revised June 2016

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Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



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