

Your Teen & Pot

What parents **Need to Know** about marijuana

Nearly 4 out of 10 students, grades 9-12, have tried marijuana.* Even if you don't think your child is experimenting, it's important to talk to them about the risks and consequences of marijuana use.

*According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey.



Times have changed—and so has marijuana.

Marijuana is a mixture of the dried shredded leaves, stems, seeds and flowers of Cannabis Sativa, the hemp plant. Marijuana contains the chemical THC, (delta-9-tetrahydro-cannabinol) which causes the mind-altering effects of intoxication. The average THC content in marijuana has risen from less than 4% in 1983 to more than 10.1% in 2008—**making today's marijuana far more potent**¹. The increase in marijuana potency means a smaller amount can induce a higher level of intoxication, making it easier to get higher, faster.

Effects on the Brain

Despite what you may have heard—pot is NOT harmless: Some studies indicate that **problems with attention, learning, memory and processing speeds** can be associated with heavy marijuana use during adolescence.

Effects on the Lungs

Regular marijuana smokers may have many of the **same lung problems that tobacco smokers have**. This may be because marijuana users inhale more deeply and hold the smoke in their lungs. The amount of tar inhaled by marijuana smokers and the level of carbon monoxide absorbed are three to five times greater than from tobacco smoke.

Psychological Effects

In a study of college students, heavy marijuana users made more errors, had more problems paying attention to changes in the environment, and had more problems learning, than students who used less often. Using marijuana weekly or more has also been shown to **double a teen's risk of depression or anxiety**².

Addiction

Research has established that **marijuana is addictive**³ and that it is three times more likely to lead to dependence among adolescents than adults⁴.



Tips for Talking to Your Teen about Marijuana

1 Talk to your child about marijuana BEFORE you suspect they are experimenting. Studies show that youth are most likely to initiate marijuana use between the ages of 13 and 15 – and during this time you have the most influence over their behavior. After age 15, teens tend to base their decisions more on peer influence⁵.

2 Before you talk to your teen, make sure you speak their language. Check out our **teen room** for insight into modern marijuana lingo and paraphernalia, and tips for recognizing the obvious and not-so-obvious signs of teen marijuana use.

3 If you think your teen has been using marijuana, ask them about it immediately. Kids say that losing their parents' respect and trust are the most important reasons not to use drugs.

4 Help your teen to understand ALL of the consequences of marijuana use – both physical and legal. In Maine, possession of less than 2.5 ounces of marijuana is a civil violation with a fine ranging from \$350-\$1000. Possession of more than 2.5 ounces is a misdemeanor or felony, and is punishable with jail time.



1: Mehmedic Z, et al (2010) Potency Trends of Δ^9 -THC and Other Cannabinoids in Confiscated Cannabis Preparations from 1993 to 2008. J Forensic Sci. 55(5):1209-17. **2:** Hayatbakhsh, M.R. et al. (2007) Cannabis and anxiety and depression in young adults: A large prospective study. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 46(3):408-17. **3:** National Institute on Drug Abuse (2010) Research Report Series: Marijuana Abuse. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute of Health. **4:** Gfroerer, J. C., Wu, L.-T., & Penne, M. A. (2002). Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns, and Implications (Analytic Series: A-17, DHHS Publication No. SMA 02-3711). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. **5:** de la Flor, A. (2009) Early intervention can reduce marijuana use initiation among youth. CADCA National Coalition Institute's Research into Action.