

FACT SHEET: MARIJUANA

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There are physical and mental health consequences for young people who use marijuana under the age of 24, while the brain is completing important development. Using marijuana during this time can actually rewire the brain for addiction as it interferes with the brain's reward center. Early marijuana use increases the risk of becoming dependent on other substances.

Adolescent use of marijuana can interfere with attention, motivation, memory and learning.

Q & A

How strong is today's marijuana?

Today's marijuana is almost 300% stronger than it was in the 1980's and can contain over 18% THC (tetrahydrocannabinol)-the main psychoactive ingredient. This high level of THC poses a greater risk for young people and has been linked to developing depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses.¹

It has also led to an increase in emergency room visits for increased heart rate, psychosis, vomiting and panic attacks.

How does marijuana impact driving ability?

Marijuana reduces the ability to do things which require concentration, quick reactions and coordination. These skills are impaired for at least four to six hours after using marijuana, long after the "high" is gone; and the effects are made worse when combined with alcohol.

In Colorado, marijuana related driving deaths increased over 66% after the state legalized marijuana in 2013.²



MARIJUANA AND THE TEEN BRAIN

Because a young person's brain is still developing until their mid 20's, using marijuana during this time can permanently damage the structure of their brain, specifically the areas dealing with memory and problem solving. Regular marijuana use by teens can lead to an IQ drop of up to eight points. Students who use marijuana regularly (defined as once a week or more) tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school.³

HEALTH RISKS OF MARIJUANA



Because marijuana use causes the heart to beat about 50% faster and increases blood pressure, the risk of a heart attack is several times higher after smoking.⁴



Using marijuana reduces oxygen in the blood making the body work harder to perform normal functions.⁵



Marijuana use affects hormones in boys and girls and interferes with testosterone production.⁶



Young people may think that marijuana helps with anxiety. However, chemicals found in marijuana mimic one of the brain's neurotransmitters making them feel good—yet, it reduces the amount the body makes on its own. Once dependent on THC, they will feel good when they are using it, but they won't have enough of their own chemical messengers to feel good when they are not using it.



Marijuana smoke contains many of the same toxins and carcinogens as tobacco smoke and causes the same respiratory illnesses. It deposits four times as much tar in the lungs as tobacco since it is unfiltered and inhaled more deeply.⁷