

## Marijuana: Weeding Out Fact From Fiction

Parents have the greatest influence on whether or not their children use drugs.  
Deliver a strong message. Be clear about your expectations. Establish consequences. And, follow through!

### Trends:

- How potent is today's marijuana? **VERY**  
1970's: 1% THC  
1985: 3.5% THC  
2006: 8.8% THC (over 5x potency compared to 1970) Have found concentrations as high as 32%.
- How available is it? **VERY.**  
Most kids can get it in a day. Many kids can get it in less than an hour.
- Who is using it?  
Mean age of initiation for 12-17 yr. olds is 13.7  
By 10<sup>th</sup> grade 31% have tried Marijuana  
By 12<sup>th</sup> grade 41.8% have tried it (2 in every 5 students)

### Risks:

- Is marijuana addictive? **YES.** Chance of addiction is 1 in 6 for those who begin smoking in adolescence. For adults it is 1 in 9.
- Is marijuana a gateway drug? **YES.** Smoking marijuana significantly increases the risk of other drug use.
- Does marijuana affect brain development? **YES**  
Causes permanent damage to the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus and cerebellum. (Stopping does not fully restore function.) Skills Affected: Impulse control, planning, decision making, working memory, allocating attention, sustained attention. For those who start smoking before 18 and smoke 1-3 x a day, 5-7 days a week, experience up to a permanent 6 point decline in IQ.
- Is marijuana as bad on lungs as cigarettes? **YES. WORSE.**  
Marijuana contains equal amounts of tar but has up to 50% more carcinogens and result in greater tar deposits. One joint has a similar effect to airflow obstruction of up to 5 cigarettes.
- Does marijuana increase the risk of having other psychotic disorder like schizophrenia? **YES.**
- Does marijuana affect the heart in any way? **YES**  
Causes an increase in heart rate that last 2-3 hours. This increases the volume of blood pumped. Can be dangerous for those with heart conditions or for unhealthy older users.
- Can marijuana use mask and/or cause other issues? **YES**  
Anxiety, depression, anger, low self-esteem, sleep disturbances, no motivation, no interest, academic performance, etc. and robs kids of the opportunity to develop life skills like resilience and persistence when faced with adversity.
- Does marijuana compromise driving skills? **YES**  
Doubles the risk of a car crash.

**What can you do? Prevention is key!**

- Educate yourself and your children.
- Set expectations and consequences (Family Values, Have a no tolerance policy!)
- Follow through
- Look for signs and monitor technology
- Know your kids' friends and families
- Intervene early (random drug tests – [www.drugtestyourteen.com](http://www.drugtestyourteen.com))
- If already in the muck of it, intervene now!
- Have family dinners (National Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University)

**Remember: A child who reaches age 21 without using illegal drugs, abusing alcohol or smoking is most likely never to do so.**