



# ***THE TRUTH ABOUT MARIJUANA***

Marijuana is the most widely used illegal drug in the US, and its use is on the rise. People think that marijuana is safe, but there are real risks. With more states legalizing the drug and the strength of marijuana increasing, you should know its dangers and its effects.

## **What is Marijuana & how is it used?**

Marijuana is the dried leaves and flowers of the hemp plant (*cannabis sativa* or *cannabis indica*). Of the over 500 different chemicals found in marijuana, THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) is the primary mind altering substance. THC distorts perception and causes users to feel "high."

**The strength of marijuana has been on the rise. In the 1990s, the level of THC was around 4% - today it's around 15% (or even higher in concentrates).**

**Smoking or vaping marijuana concentrates has become more common. Extracts such as hash oil, budder, wax or shatter may contain levels of THC 3 to 5 times higher than the plant itself.**



# Marijuana is taken in many different forms.

**Smoking:** By far the most common way marijuana is ingested, smoking marijuana comes with a heavily increased risk of cancer. Marijuana is smoked in many different ways, from bong to pipes to rolled up joints and blunts (essentially marijuana cigars).



**Edibles:** Marijuana edibles are cookies, brownies, cakes, candies and drinks made with marijuana or infused with THC extract. The amount of THC in these products is much often higher than in a joint.



**Vaping THC:** Much like an e-cigarette, Marijuana vapes heat up concentrated marijuana extract. Many THC vape cartridges, especially ones floating around in states where marijuana is illegal, are completely unregulated and unapproved by the FDA. These cartridges can contain heavy metals and additives like vitamin e-acetate, chemicals that have created an epidemic of teens and young people ending up in hospitals and even dying.



**Dabbing and Concentrate:** Smoking butane hash oil (BHO) is a trend gaining popularity. Inhaling the fumes from heated BHO is called "dabbing" because it only takes a dab of the material to get high.

## All of them are dangerous and risky.

# HOW DOES IT WORK?

Marijuana affects each person in different ways depending on their unique biology, the specific strain's potency, previous experience with the drug, the way a person uses the drug, and the use of alcohol or other drugs at the same time. Some people do not feel anything when they use marijuana. Some feel relaxed or high. Others can suddenly get anxious and paranoid, especially common when a person uses stronger marijuana, takes too much, or isn't used to taking it.

When marijuana is taken in, THC enters the body and heads to the brain. The THC molecules attach to the brain's cannabinoid receptors, interfering with the way the brain's cells work, flooding the brain with the feel good chemical **dopamine**. These cannabinoid receptors are concentrated in the parts of the brain that control movement, coordination, concentration, memory, learning and affect a person's cognitive functions, like judgement and pleasure. And speaking of the brain...



# **Marijuana Is Tough On The Brain.**

**Marijuana use can be incredibly harmful, especially to teens.**

The brain is not fully developed until the age of 25. During development, the young brain builds structures and forms connections that make it more efficient and strengthens abilities such as self control. When young people take mind altering drugs like marijuana, it has incredibly powerful and negative effects on their brain development. THC affects the areas of the brain responsible for memory and learning, meaning that the more marijuana you use, the worse your memory will be and the harder it will be to learn new information.



***Studies have shown that frequent marijuana users have lower grades and can lose as many as eight IQ points.***

# MARIJUANA REWIRES YOUR BRAIN

Short-term effects of marijuana include:

- Altered senses
- Loss of time
- Mood changes
- Lowered reaction times
- Memory problems
- Poor thinking and concentration
- Slowed reaction times
- Loss of coordination and balance
- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Psychosis

**DANGEROUS  
AND RISKY**

# Marijuana Will Harm Your Body

## **Long-Term Threats Include:**

### ***Mental Health***

Marijuana use has been linked to depression, anxiety and suicide in young people. Studies show that using marijuana in the teen years can lead to an increase in the risk of developing psychosis (having false thoughts).

### ***High Heart Rate***

The heart rate of the user increases greatly- up to double its normal rate. This abnormal increase is very dangerous. The risk of heart attack during marijuana use is up to four times as high as under normal conditions.

### ***Lung and Breathing***

The lungs are irritated by marijuana smoking and vaping, causing a chronic cough just like smoking cigarettes. Marijuana smoke is destructive and serious health issues like bronchitis and asthma often follow those who smoke. It hasn't been determined if Marijuana causes cancer, but it does contain toxins and carcinogens, chemicals known to cause cancer in the body.

### ***Pregnancy***

Using marijuana while pregnant is linked to lower birth weights and behavioral problems in babies.

**Marijuana is NOT a Harmless Drug.**

# MARIJUANA IS ADDICTIVE

**Many people falsely believe that marijuana is not addictive.**

Research into the long-term effects of marijuana is still ongoing, and much remains to be answered, but the one unquestioned long-term risk is addiction.

What causes a marijuana addiction depends on many factors, including how young a person is when they start, their family history, if they are using other drugs, their relationships with friends and family and if they take part in positive activities in school and the community.

**About 1 in 10 marijuana users become addicted. Start before age 18, and the rate of addiction jumps to 1 in 6.**

The rate of developing an addiction can be as high as 50% for people who use marijuana every day.

For those who become dependent on marijuana, quitting brings its own set of physically draining withdrawal symptoms.

**Withdrawal can last for days or up to weeks, and symptoms include:**

- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Increased anxiety
- Cravings for the drug
- Mood Swings
- Restlessness
- Physical Discomfort

**Around 4,000,000 people in the US are addicted to marijuana**

# MARIJUANA AND YOUR GRADES

High school students that use marijuana are more likely to fail classes and drop out of school and are far less likely to go to college.



Additionally, especially in states where marijuana is illegal, marijuana usage could get you expelled or suspended from school, fired from your job, or locked up behind bars.

**The effect of marijuana on the mind continues long after the high is over.** Although medical professionals have suspected for many years that marijuana use takes a lasting toll on mental function, recent studies confirm their fears.

**A person who uses marijuana does not return to their normal mental capacity for at least a day and at most several weeks.** For a student, this means that marijuana use translates directly into a serious learning handicap, hurting grades as well as any other mentally demanding activities such as sports, drama, music, or debate.

## MARIJUANA WILL HURT YOUR GRADES

# MARIJUANA & DRIVING

**Marijuana use doubles the risk of car crashes.**

**THC consumption affects motor skills, coordination, concentration, reasoning abilities, attention, and judgement, all of which are crucial to safe driving.**

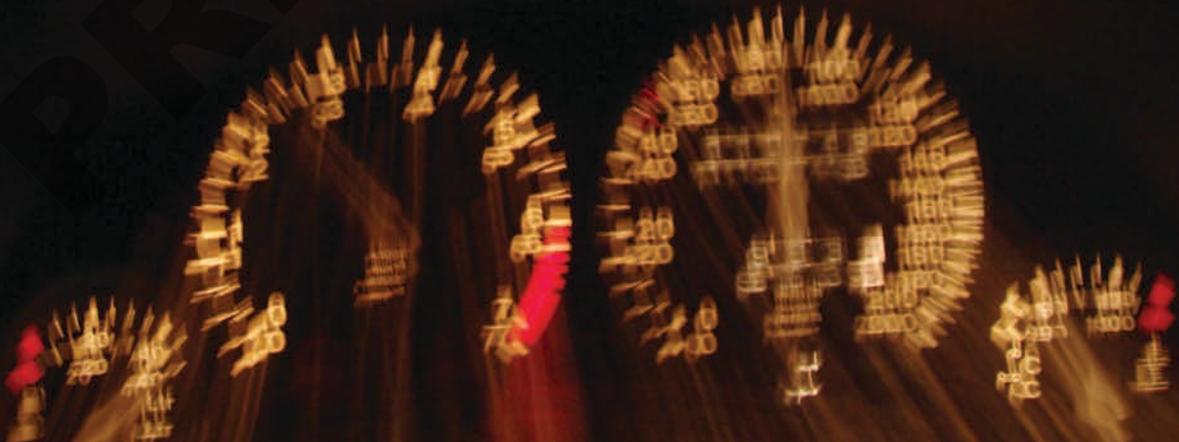
Drivers who have smoked marijuana show delayed response to stimuli. They are unable to react in a timely manner to red lights, stop

signs, other cars, or pedestrians. Marijuana impairs a driver's ability to judge distances. This means that they will be more likely to follow other vehicles too closely and less likely to apply the brakes correctly. Impaired drivers have difficulty maintaining their speed and lane position. This poses a large risk to other drivers and increases the likelihood that an impaired driver will damage

private property or strike pedestrians. Marijuana also makes it more difficult to focus on driving and the road, again increasing the risk of a crash.

**High school seniors who use marijuana are 2 times more likely to get a traffic ticket and 65% more likely to get into an accident.**

***Marijuana is the most commonly detected illicit substance in fatal car accidents.***



# MARIJUANA EDIBLES

**Marijuana edibles are THC-infused foods and drinks that often contain extremely high concentrations of the drug.**

These highly concentrated THC products are designed to give the user a high from eating the food, a method that leads to several problems. First, it takes much longer for the effects of edibles to kick in (up to three hours) because the THC is ingested instead of smoked. Many users take edibles, become impatient because they don't feel anything, take more, and overdose on marijuana. This can lead to dangerous and strange behavior, as users who have accidentally taken too much lose control of themselves and their actions. Edibles are one of the most dangerous forms of taking marijuana.



## LIVES RUINED



Levy Thamba Pongi



Richard Kirk

**Levy Thamba Pongi** was a 19-year-old college student from Wyoming who jumped to his death from a Denver hotel balcony after eating a marijuana cookie. Police reported that witnesses said that Pongi was rambling incoherently after consuming a large serving of the cookie. The Denver coroner ruled that "marijuana intoxication" was a significant factor in Pongi's death.

**Richard Kirk** of Denver faces first-degree murder charges stemming from the fatal shooting of his wife. Kirk's wife called 9-1-1 to report that he was rambling incoherently and experiencing hallucinations after consuming marijuana candy and taking prescription medications. Kirk allegedly shot and killed his wife while she was on the phone with a police dispatcher.

# DABS & CONCENTRATES

Inhaling marijuana dabs, or Butane Hash Oil (BHO), is an incredibly dangerous way to ingest extremely high concentrations of THC.



It is estimated that one small dab of BHO equals an entire joint. Many users pass out after inhaling a small amount of BHO fumes. Regular marijuana has THC concentrations of 15% on average. BHO concentrations can sometimes be higher than 80%. The high levels of THC in BHO create much stronger and longer lasting side effects. The high from one small inhalation of BHO can last for days, which is not fun as users may have continuous hallucinations, psychotic episodes, severe paranoia, heightened aggression, and heart palpitations. *Dabbing may be the most damaging way to use marijuana due to the astronomical levels of THC present.*



# K2 & SPICE

K2 and Spice, types of synthetic marijuana, is a mixture of various herbs and spices that are sprayed with chemicals similar to THC.



These synthetic highs are completely unregulated and extremely dangerous, as the chemicals used are very deadly and incredibly easy to overdose on. Users can experience convulsions, increased heart rate and blood pressure, delusions, and death. The scariest part of synthetic marijuana is that it is incredibly difficult to tell the difference between the fake and real marijuana. **You never know what you're smoking, and any hit you take could be your last.**



# VAPING DEATHS

Vaping THC is possibly the most dangerous way to use marijuana, and it is only becoming more and more popular among young people.

+ .. >> web search:

+ .. >> 'thc vaping deaths'

+ .. >> results: E-cigarette, or Vaping, product use-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI).

+ 2,807 hospitalized EVALI cases or deaths have been reported to CDC from all 50 states

+ Sixty-eight deaths have been confirmed in 29 states

+ National and state data from reports and product sample testing show tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)-containing e-cigarette products, are linked to most EVALI cases and play a major role in the outbreak.

+ conclusion:

E-cigarette, or vaping, products (nicotine- or THC-containing) should never be used by youths, young adults, or women who are pregnant.



The problem is that it's impossible to know exactly what is in the vape cartridge. THC vape cartridges often contain heavy metals, pesticides, and vitamin e-acetate, that can be damaging or deadly when inhaled. Emergency room visits related to vaping have skyrocketed over the past few years. There have been thousands of lung injury cases and over 60 deaths linked directly to vaping THC. **One lung surgeon described the damage done to one teenager's lungs as "an evil I've never seen before."**



# WAYS TO SAY NO



**Odds are you'll find yourself in a situation where you're offered marijuana.**

Saying no might feel a little weird. You don't want to seem uptight or afraid, but you know that using marijuana isn't a great choice. The best way to say no without causing a scene is to casually and politely give an excuse that can't be argued with.

## "I quit smoking."

This is great if you don't want to come off sounding like a NARC. Anyone pressuring an ex-smoker lacks respect and understanding.

## "I've got to drive."

This should stop them in their tracks. Tell them that it's too dangerous and you can't afford to get a ticket.

## "I need to keep my head clear."

Or "I've got work in the morning" or "Can't, big test tomorrow" or "Too much homework to do tonight" are all variations that can work. This lets everyone know that you don't let drugs rule your life or interfere with your goals.

## "It makes me feel sick or tired."

Using this one should deflect whatever peer pressure is thrown your way. "I don't like it" is your opinion and no one can argue with that.

**Peer pressure is real, and having a plan to deal with it increases your odds of being successful.**



Trying to end any kind of addiction is very difficult, and marijuana addiction is no different. If you or someone you know needs help with marijuana, here are a few suggestions and resources.

Reach out to an adult or someone you trust. Family members, a coach or church member can be great sources for advice and directions.

Many high schools and colleges have guidance counselors and programs that can help students cope with marijuana and other drug dependencies.

## Additional Resources for Getting Help or More Information

**SAMSHA's National Hotline**  
**800-662-HELP (4357)**

[www.samsha.com](http://www.samsha.com)

**National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**

<http://drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/marijuana>

**Partnership to End Addiction**

<http://drugfree.org/drugs/marijuana/>

**Crisis Call Center**

800-273-8255 or text ANSWER to 839863

[crisiscallcenter.org/substance-abuse](http://crisiscallcenter.org/substance-abuse)

***There's one trusted way to avoid marijuana dependency and addiction: Stay Away from Marijuana.***

**Need Help?  
Get Help.  
Don't Wait!**



**MARIJUANA:**  
**DON'T SMOKE, DON'T VAPE,**  
**DON'T EAT.**  
**JUST DON'T.**

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