

# New Surgeon General's Report Highlights Dangers of Marijuana Use

*The new data confirms mounting body of scientific evidence highlighting problems with rising marijuana use; SAM Honorary Advisor Patrick Kennedy to speak as part of report's official release*

**For Immediate Release**  
**November 17, 2016**

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[ALEXANDRIA, VA] - A new report, released today by the office of the U.S. Surgeon General, adds to the mounting body of scientific evidence highlighting the dangers of marijuana use and emphasizing prevention as essential for protecting youth. It also stands as a further warning of the large impending public health costs of marijuana legalization policies, which permit the marijuana industry to profit from the patterns of heavy marijuana use that pose the greatest threat to public health and safety.

Among the report's findings:

- **Long-term health consequences of marijuana use:** mental health problems, chronic cough, frequent respiratory infections, increased risk for cancer, and suppression of the immune system.
- **Other serious health-related issues stemming from marijuana use:** breathing problems; increased risk of cancer of the head, neck, lungs, and respiratory tract; possible loss of IQ points when repeated use begins in adolescence; babies born with problems with attention, memory, and problem solving (when used by the mother during pregnancy).
- **Increased risk for traffic accidents:** Marijuana use "is linked to a roughly two-fold increase in accident risk."
- **Increased risk of schizophrenia:** "[T]he use of marijuana, particularly marijuana with a high THC content, might contribute to schizophrenia in those who have specific genetic vulnerabilities.
- **Increased risk of addiction from high-potency marijuana available in legalized states:** "[C]oncern is growing that increasing use of marijuana extracts with extremely high amounts of THC could lead to higher rates of addiction among marijuana users."
- **Permanent Loss of IQ:** "One study followed people from age 13 to 38 and found that those who began marijuana use in their teens and developed a persistent cannabis use disorder had up to an eight point drop in IQ, even if they stopped using in adulthood."

"Once again, the scientific community has spoken loud and clear on the numerous, and serious health risks of marijuana," said Kevin Sabet, President of SAM. "The more we know about marijuana, the worse it appears for public health and safety. Policymakers, especially those in the incoming Presidential administration and Congress, should read this report closely and heed the advice of the scientific community."

"In particular, the Surgeon General's report underscores the serious problems with patterns of heavy marijuana use -- the same patterns that furnish the pot industry with the vast majority of its revenues," commented Jeffrey Zinsmeister, SAM's Executive Vice President. "As we seek to avoid the mistakes we made with Big Tobacco, we should be aware that the pot industry profits off of the very types of marijuana use that most harm public health and safety."