Marijuana
Fast Facts

Marijuana Harmless? Think Again
MarijuanaHarmlessThinkAgain.org

THIS IS NOT YOUR PARENT'S MARIJUANA: POTENCY IS ON THE RISE

• In 2009, THC concentrations in marijuana averaged close to 10% compared to around 4% in the 1980s. This may account for the increase in ER visits and addiction.

• Between 1993 and 2008, the average concentration of THC in confiscated marijuana jumped from 3.4 to 8.8%. Meanwhile, hospital and rehabilitation center admission rates for minors abusing marijuana soared by 188% between 1992 and 2006. In contrast, admissions for alcohol abuse for the same group over the same period declined by 64%.

2.5 ounces of marijuana

RISKS ARE GREAT

• Alters the brain's neurons causing short and long-term negative effects. THC, one of over 400 chemicals in marijuana, over-activates the brain's endocannabinoid system, causing the high and interfering with the neural communication network that plays an important role in normal brain development and function.

• Reduced inhibitions lead to risky behaviors, distorted perceptions, impaired coordination, and thinking and problem solving become difficult as does learning and memory.

• Adolescent use harms the brain, lowering IQ 7-8 points; use before age 15 means a threefold likelihood of later mental illness such as schizophrenia.

• Use predicts high school/college failure.

AND THERE'S MORE...

• Over 107 million Americans have tried marijuana at least once; approximately 2.6 million used for the first time in 2011.

• In 2010, 17.4 million Americans ages 12 and up (6.9% of population) were current users; 4.5 million classified with marijuana dependence or abuse.

• Contrary to popular belief, marijuana is addictive. Approximately 9% of users become addicted; the number increases for those starting young: 17% (1 in 6) and for daily users 25 to 50% become addicted.

• Withdrawal Symptoms: irritability, sleeplessness, decreased appetite, anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and drug cravings, all of which threaten abstinence.

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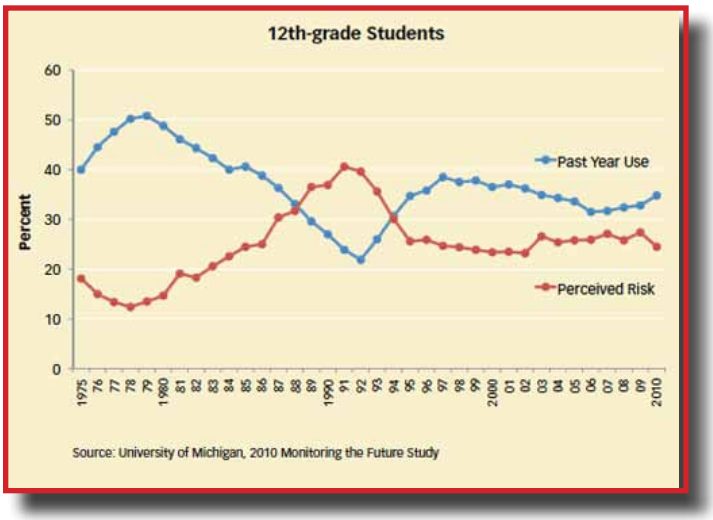
BETWEEN 2004 TO 2011, MARIJUANA-RELATED EMERGENCY ROOM VISITS INCREASED 52% (445,000 OR 146.2 VISITS PER 100,000 POPULATION)

• Smoke, as with tobacco, is a toxic mixture of gases and particulates, many of them harmful, and may promote lung and respiratory tract ailments – given the 70% more irritants and carcinogens than tobacco.

• Marijuana is a Schedule I drug.

• Schedule I drugs are subject to strict controls and the harshest penalties for violating these controls because they have "a high potential for abuse," "no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States," and lack "accepted safety for use of the drug under medical supervision." They are deemed the most dangerous controlled substances… and may lead to severe psychological or physical dependence. 21 U.S.C. § 812(b)(1)(2).



FDA-approved drugs made from marijuana or synthetic THC:

Marinol, Cesamet: Synthetic, pill form; relieves nausea and vomiting; used to reverse weight loss in AIDS patients.

Savitex: Combines 2 ingredients from marijuana, THC and CBD, a non-psychoactive cannabidiol. Approved in Canada, U.K.; undergoing FDA approval in U.S.

Drug Treatment

2010 treatment admission rate for primary marijuana was 21% higher (127 per 100,000 age 12 and older) than 2000 (105 per 100,000).

- 75% were male
- Average age was 25

Admissions for primary marijuana age 12 and older increased from 14% of admissions in 2000 to 18% in 2010.

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MARIJUANA AND INCARCERATION

In Arizona, only 6.3% of the 2009 inmate population was committed for drug possession as the most serious offense. Of those, 95% are repeat offenders and 38% have a history of felony violence. Less than 1% is in for marijuana possession only.

An astonishingly high number of criminal offenders are marijuana users.

Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM II): UAs from adult male arrestees in five cities over a 21-day period in 2012, showed marijuana as the most prevalent drug. Positive tests by city: 37% Atlanta / 58% Chicago / 51% New York / 54% Sacramento / 44% Denver.

MARIJUANA AND DRIVING

Research shows that user/drivers have slower reaction times, impaired judgment, and difficulty responding to signals and sounds.

The skills needed to drive safely – alertness, concentration, coordination, judgment, and reaction time – are controlled by the same parts of the brain affected by THC. Driving under the influence of marijuana is illegal, and has consequences: loss of license, fines & jail but it is also dangerous.

ARIZONA YOUTH SURVEY

- 30-day use by teens increased 14.4% from 2008 to 2012 (cumulative), although there was a slight decrease between 2010-2102.

- Marijuana and ecstasy were the only 2 out of 16 substances for which teen use went up.

- 2012: the first time in history that 30-day marijuana use surpassed 30-day cigarette use.

- 11.6% of teens obtained marijuana from a medical marijuana cardholder (probably a low estimate as other answers include from friends and family).

- Teens (users and non-users alike) think marijuana is far less risky than tobacco and prescription drugs.

- Kids are getting younger for first use of marijuana (2010-2012).

*People often pose the rhetorical question: "**Has anyone ever died from using marijuana?**"*
The answer is YES, when it is the cause of an otherwise avoidable auto collision.

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2/3 of American adults drink alcohol at least once during the course of a year.

13.8 million Americans or 17% either abuse alcohol or suffer from alcoholism.

76 million Americans or 43% have alcoholism in their families.

In 1998, alcohol abuse cost an estimated $185 billion in lost productivity, illness, premature death, and healthcare expenditures.

While 45% of the costs fall on the abusers and their families, 38% falls on government and society through lost or reduced tax revenue, impact on the criminal justice system, and higher insurance premiums, as well as the costs to victims of alcohol-related crimes and trauma.

Potential federal/state tax revenue would pale compared to social/health costs:

Alcohol taxes raise $14.5 billion yearly covering less than 10% of the cost to society.

Tobacco taxes raise $25 billion covering and 13% of costs.

SOURCES

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