

# What You Need to Know About Youth & Marijuana

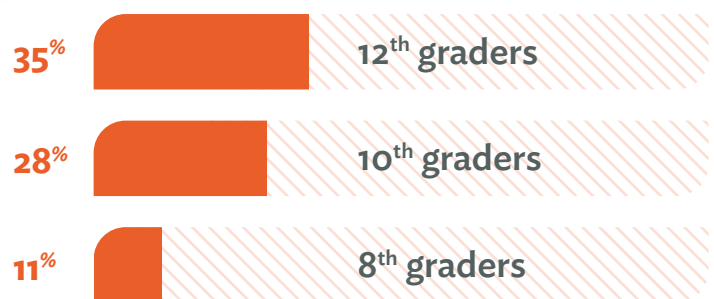
## WHAT IS MARIJUANA?

Marijuana (also called weed, pot, bud, or cannabis – see the [Drug Enforcement and Administration's Report](#) for more street names) refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems and seeds of the cannabis plant.<sup>1</sup> The plant contains more than 100 different compounds, or cannabinoids, like tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD).<sup>2</sup> THC is the primary compound in the plant responsible for impairing and psychoactive effects.<sup>3</sup>

## HOW DO PEOPLE USE MARIJUANA? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT PRODUCTS?

Marijuana and oils and concentrates containing compounds from marijuana can be consumed in a variety of ways, including by smoking (e.g., joints, bowls, bongs, blunts), vaping (e.g., electronic vaporizing devices like e-cigarettes, vape pens), eating (e.g., cookies, chocolate, candies), drinking (e.g., soda, coffee, tinctures) and dabbing (e.g., through a dab rig).<sup>4</sup> Currently, there is not enough research to suggest that one way of consuming marijuana is safer than another.<sup>4</sup> Each method of consuming marijuana has different public health and safety risks and all can be harmful for youth whose brains are still developing.<sup>4</sup>

## HOW MANY YOUNG PEOPLE USE MARIJUANA?



Prevalence of marijuana use among youth varies by state, but in 2020, at a national level, about 35% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 28% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 11% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders used marijuana in the past year.<sup>5</sup> The prevalence of youth who report daily or near daily use is lower, with 7% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 4% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 1% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting daily or near daily use.<sup>5</sup> Past year marijuana use and daily or near daily marijuana use have been stable nationally for the past decade. Past year vaping of marijuana increased exponentially among 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders from 2017 to 2019, but remained steady in 2020, with 22% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders, 19% of 10<sup>th</sup> graders and 8% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting that they vaped marijuana in the past year.<sup>5</sup>

## DOES MARIJUANA AFFECT THE BRAIN?

Yes, marijuana use directly affects the brain – specifically parts of the brain that are responsible for memory, learning, attention, decision-making, coordination, emotions and reaction time.<sup>2</sup>

When people begin using marijuana during their youth, especially at high levels, there is increased risk for impairments in brain development and attention, memory and learning cognition.<sup>2</sup> These deficits may be long-lasting and can affect related outcomes like educational attainment.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT ARE THE OTHER HEALTH EFFECTS OF MARIJUANA?

Using marijuana directly affects the brain and can lead to altered senses, altered sense of time, changes in mood, impaired body movement, difficulty with thinking and problem-solving, impaired memory, hallucinations and delusions when taken in high doses and acute psychosis (risk is highest with regular marijuana use and consumption of high levels of THC).<sup>1</sup> Marijuana can also cause impairments in coordination and reaction time, which can lead to increased risk for motor vehicle accidents and other injuries.<sup>1</sup>

How marijuana affects a person depends on several factors, including the amount of THC in the marijuana, how often it is used, the age of first use and whether other substances like tobacco and alcohol are used at the same time.<sup>2</sup>

Marijuana, especially when used daily or near daily and in high doses, can also be linked to longer term physical and behavioral effects, including increased risk of schizophrenia and other psychoses – particularly among people with a family history of psychosis; increased risk of depression and anxiety; increased risk of suicide ideation, attempt, and completion; and chronic bronchitis (primarily from smoking marijuana).<sup>2</sup>

## IS USING MARIJUANA DURING PREGNANCY SAFE?

No. Using marijuana during pregnancy can harm the baby and has been linked to lower birthweight and potential developmental outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

## IS DRIVING AFTER USING MARIJUANA SAFE?

No. Marijuana use can impair important skills required for safe driving by slowing your reaction time and ability to make decisions, impairing coordination, and distorting perception.<sup>2</sup> If you plan to use, are using, or have used alcohol or drugs, including marijuana, choose not to drive and remind your friends and family to do the same.

## IS MARIJUANA MEDICINE?

Marijuana has compounds that may help symptoms for some health problems; however, much of the research around medical uses of marijuana comes from research of isolated cannabinoids or compounds from the plant.<sup>6</sup> The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved three medications that are synthetic or plant-based cannabinoids for treatment of nausea in patients undergoing cancer chemotherapy and to stimulate appetite in patients with wasting syndrome due to AIDS (dronabinol [brand names: Marinol and Syndros] and nabilone [brand name: Cesamet]), and for the treatment of two forms of severe childhood epilepsy (Epidiolex).<sup>6</sup> No federal standards have been implemented for the quality and safety of marijuana products sold in state-based medical marijuana dispensaries. These products are not approved by the FDA.

## IS CBD THE SAME THING AS MARIJUANA?

CBD, or cannabidiol, is a compound in the cannabis plant.<sup>7</sup> CBD alone is not impairing; However, CBD products available in grocery stores, gas stations, and smoke shops are not regulated by the FDA.<sup>7</sup> This means that there are not federal standards or requirements for product testing, use of certain ingredients, labeling of certain ingredients, and other safety measures. CBD can change the way some medicines work and has not been widely studied when used in high quantities.<sup>7</sup>

## CAN MARIJUANA BE ADDICTIVE?

Yes, research suggests approximately 30% of people who use marijuana have a marijuana use disorder.<sup>6</sup> People who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are more likely to develop a marijuana use disorder as adults.<sup>6</sup> Signs that someone might be addicted to marijuana include:<sup>6</sup>

- Giving up important activities with friends and family in favor of using marijuana.
- Using marijuana even when it causes problems fulfilling everyday jobs at home, school, or work.
- Needing more marijuana to get the same effect.
- Being unsuccessful in efforts to quit using marijuana.

## REFERENCES

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