

DRUGS FACT SHEET

Marijuana

WHAT IS IT?

- Marijuana is the most commonly used illegal drug in the U.S.
- Marijuana is illegal because it puts people at risk. Marijuana use can cause significant health, social, learning and behavioral problems.
- Marijuana is highly addictive; more teens seek treatment for marijuana dependence than for all other illegal drug use combined.
- The main active chemical in marijuana is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol or THC for short.
- Over 400 chemicals are in the average marijuana plant and when it is smoked, the heat produces even more chemicals.

HOW DOES IT AFFECT THE BRAIN AND BODY?

- Marijuana affects the hippocampus in the brain which is largely responsible for memory formation.
- Marijuana also impacts the limbic system which helps control our emotions, aggression and fear.
- Short-term effects of marijuana include problems with thinking, memory, learning, problem solving, loss of coordination and increased heart rate/blood pressure.
- Longer term use of marijuana can result in a lack of interest in one's physical appearance, school and work environments.
- Marijuana use can negatively affect movement and coordination of the brain and body.
- People who smoke marijuana often develop breathing problems and experience coughing and wheezing; they also tend to have more chest colds and are at a higher risk for getting lung infections.
- When used by teens, marijuana can cause depression, suicidal tendencies and schizophrenia.
- Adolescents who use marijuana are much more likely to engage in dangerous behaviors, give in to peer pressure, abuse other drugs and commit illegal acts.
- Regular use of marijuana causes lung and brain damage; it also results in high levels of tar and carbon monoxide in the body.
- Marijuana is an illegal substance so you *cannot* be sure what type of pesticides, chemicals or other additives could be in it.



REFERENCES:

- <http://www.drugabuse.gov/MarijBroch/Marijteens.html>
- <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/mom/index.asp>
- <http://checkyourself.com/FiveMyths.aspx>
- <http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/research/job185drugs/cannabis.htm>
- <http://health.nih.gov/topic/MarijuanaAbuse>