

Marijuana (also called Cannabis)

What it is:

Marijuana is a drug created from parts of a plant called “Cannabis.” The Cannabis plant contains substances that can change the chemicals in the brain. The main chemical in the plant is “THC” (which is delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol for those who want to know the actual chemical name).

Over the years, the THC amount (concentration) in marijuana has increased a lot which makes it much stronger than it used to be. So, just a little of it can cause people to become high (intoxicated), along with the risks and side effects more easily.

How it is used:

Regular use of marijuana is now more than the regular use of alcohol (beer, wine, liquor). It is the most commonly used illegal drug in the USA and in the world, even though it can now be bought in stores that sell it. It is used more in young adults (ages 18 to 25) but many children often start using it at a very young age. Most of the time, people start using it at the age of 16, but many do so much earlier than that.

How marijuana affects us:

Marijuana can be smoked, vaped or eaten in different forms. When it is used, it usually creates feelings of being “high,” relaxed, or feeling like being in a dream. One may feel like they become “detached” (separated) from people and things around them. Also, some feel tired, dizzy, worried, nervous, and have a loss of being able to do some normal things (coordination). They also may feel sick and vomit or have stomach pain, see or hear things that are not there (hallucinations), and lose interests in people and things (not care about things like they used to care about). Some get addicted to it and need it regularly to avoid symptoms of “withdrawal.”

The developing brain:

Marijuana may slow the growth of a child’s developing brain. The brain actually continues to develop in most people by the age of 25. So, this may cause someone to be not as smart (intelligent) as they could have been. Mothers who use it during their pregnancy may also harm the brains of the unborn babies and increase the baby’s risk of later having problems with behavior and learning.

Long term risks:

For people who smoke, vape or eat marijuana regularly, there is a risk that they may become addicted to it. There is also a risk of cancer, heart disease, lung disease, lower intelligence, mental illness and suicide. It also is associated with a higher chance of taking other drugs and getting addicted to them. It also causes more car accident related injuries, deaths and being admitted to the hospital. Many people need special help to stop using it and to deal with the mental illnesses and other drug problems seen in people who use marijuana. It costs a lot of money to provide this care.

Things that can be done to help:

- Encourage your friends and family members who use marijuana to stop using it and to get help if needed to stop.
- Choose to NEVER use marijuana yourself, ever.
- Instead of using marijuana, alcohol or other drugs, always try to better understand why anyone would want to use marijuana or any drugs to begin with. They are often used to help with feelings of worry, anger or not feeling good about ourselves that can lead to using things that make these feelings go away. A trusted family member, friend or doctor can help get the care that someone you know may need who struggles with this.