

# Marijuana Fact Sheet

## What You Need to Know About Marijuana Use in Teens

The teen years are a time of rapid growth, exploration, and onset of risk taking. Taking risks with new behaviors provides kids and teens the opportunity to test their skills and abilities and discover who they are. But, some risk behaviors—such as using marijuana—can have harmful and long-lasting effects on a teen's health and well-being.

### Marijuana and the teen brain

Unlike adults, the teen brain is actively developing and often will not be fully developed until the mid 20s. Marijuana use during this period may harm the developing teen brain.

### Negative effects include:

- Difficulty thinking and problem solving.
- Problems with memory and learning.
- Impaired coordination.
- Difficulty maintaining attention.<sup>3</sup>

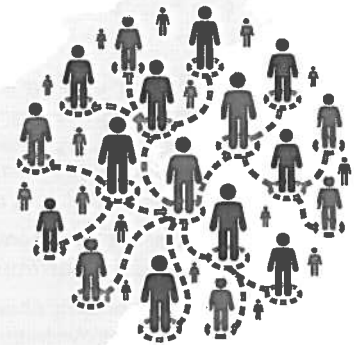
### Negative effects on school and social life

Marijuana use in adolescence or early adulthood can have a serious impact on a teen's life.

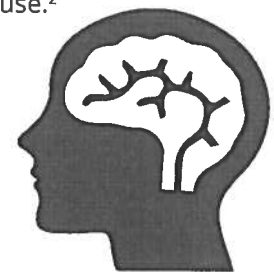
- **Decline in school performance.** Students who smoke marijuana may get lower grades and may more likely to drop out of high school than their peers who do not use.<sup>4</sup>
- **Increased risk of mental health issues.** Marijuana use has been linked to a range of mental health problems in teens such as depression or anxiety.<sup>5</sup> Psychosis has also been seen in teens at higher risk like those with a family history.<sup>6</sup>
- **Impaired driving.** Driving while impaired by any substance, including marijuana, is dangerous. Marijuana negatively affects a number of skills required for safe driving, such as reaction time, coordination, and concentration.<sup>7,8</sup>

### Fast Facts

**38% OF  
HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**  
report having used marijuana in  
their life.<sup>1</sup>



- Research shows that marijuana use can have permanent effects on the developing brain when use begins in adolescence, especially with regular or heavy use.<sup>2</sup>



- Frequent or long-term marijuana use is linked to school dropout and lower educational achievement.<sup>3</sup>



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- **Potential for addiction.**<sup>a</sup> Research shows that about 1 in 6 teens who repeatedly use marijuana can become addicted, which means that they may make unsuccessful efforts to quit using marijuana or may give up important activities with friends and family in favor of using marijuana.

**For more information, visit:**

- YRBSS Results, Slides, and MMWR Publications: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>
- Parent Engagement Tips: [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/parent\\_engagement.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/parent_engagement.htm)
- School Connectedness: [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/school\\_connectedness.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm)
- NIDA Drug Facts: Marijuana: <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/marijuanaExternal>
- NIDA Marijuana: Facts for Teens: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana-facts-teens/letter-to-teensExternal>
- Adolescents and Marijuana: <http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets/adolescents.htmExternal>

**References**

- a: *The term “addiction” is used to describe compulsive drug seeking despite negative consequences. However, we recognize that “addiction” is not considered a specific diagnosis in the fifth edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)—a diagnostic manual used by clinicians that contains descriptions and symptoms of all mental disorders classified by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Rather the DSM-5 uses the term substance use disorder. However, throughout this document addiction is used synonymously with having a substance use disorder for ease of language recognition and understanding.*
1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data. 2016 [cited 2016 November 16, 2016]; Available from: <http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/>.
  2. National Institute on Drug Abuse. What are marijuana’s long-term effects on the brain? 2016 [cited 2016 November 16, 2016]; Available from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/marijuana/what-are-marijuanas-long-term-effects-brainExternal>.
  3. Fergusson, D.M. and J.M. Boden, Cannabis use and later life outcomes. *Addiction*, 2008. 103(6): p. 969-76; discussion 977-8.
  4. Broyd, S.J., et al., Acute and Chronic Effects of Cannabinoids on Human Cognition-A Systematic Review. *Biol Psychiatry*, 2016. 79(7): p. 557-67.
  5. Copeland, J., S. Rooke, and W. Swift, Changes in cannabis use among young people: impact on mental health. *Curr Opin Psychiatry*, 2013. 26(4): p. 325-9.
  6. Arseneault, L., et al., Cannabis use in adolescence and risk for adult psychosis: longitudinal prospective study. *BMJ*, 2002. 325(7374): p. 1212-3.
  7. Bondallaz, P., et al., Cannabis and its effects on driving skills. *Forensic Sci Int*, 2016. 268: p.92-102.
  8. Hartman, R.L. and M.A. Huestis, Cannabis effects on driving skills. *Clin Chem*, 2013. 59(3): p. 478-92.
  9. National Institute on Drug Abuse. *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction 2014* [cited 2016 December 29].